

A WHOLISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION:  
INTEGRATING THE SECULAR AND THE SACRED

by

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A professional project  
presented to the faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

May 1986

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**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

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## ABSTRACT

This project attempts to define a basis upon which educators from the church and the wider society can develop comprehensive curricula. It rests on two assumptions: first, that all life, and thus all education, has a religious dimension; second, that a new incarnational spirituality is emerging which integrates religious and secular concerns and prompts society towards a more wholistic approach to education.

Epistemologically, it posits that there are five general modes of knowing to which education must attend: the relational, the conceptual, the rational, the chronological, and the scriptural. It further posits that incarnational spirituality allows for the integration of these modes of knowing such that disciplines which have traditionally been viewed as strictly secular or strictly religious, are merged.

While recognizing that religious concerns impinge on all subjects, the project's focus is on defining the scope of religious education. It suggests that religious knowledge rests on the human ability to abstractly derive meaning within each of the five modes of knowing. Religion, thus, is not a single academic discipline but the intermeshing of five disciplines. The project defines these disciplines and explains how they can be integrated with

secular disciplines such that the focus in religious education is shifted to liturgy, Heilsgeschichte, stewardship, and community.

The final section is a call for religious institutions to rethink their commitment to parallel education via state schools and church schools. It traces the history of how an educational system that was started by the church has become divorced from religion. It notes various problems with the Sunday School, state schools, parochial and private day schools arising from the secular-sacred split. It suggests a structural alternative to present schooling practices based on a pluralist concept of society. Such an alternative, it is argued, would allow for much greater choice in education and holds great potential for religious education.



SECTION I

## INTRODUCTION

### THE PROJECT

This project represents a growing vision of how education both in the churches and the schools can become more meaningful and more comprehensive. The impetus for the project was a desire to design a religious education curriculum which would integrate five areas of study important to Christian faith and understanding. The impossibility of teaching such a curriculum in the Sunday School was immediately apparent and an exploration into other structures for the church's educational ministry was begun. This led to an evaluation of the growing phenomenon of Christian day schools, which in turn, led to a reconsideration of the whole enterprise of religious education within the larger context of the education of the American public. Thus, what started out as a curriculum project grew into a concern for the educational ministry of the Christian church within American society.

A concern for reordering the structures of education in the United States has grown as the author considered not only how to integrate the various disciplines within the religious sphere, but how religion as a whole is related to other fields of study and inquiry. A major discovery is that religious concerns interrelate with general education, not at a single point, but at five points at least. Thus to

segregate religious education from general education is to truncate both enterprises in a number of ways.

Religious and general education have become separated as a result of the appropriation of hierarchical, reductionistic, and humanistic spiritualities. Fortunately, however, there appears to be a new spirituality emerging which allows for and encourages a full integration of the sacred and the secular. This project consciously appropriates this new spirituality in an attempt to bring together religious and general education.

The project uses as its basis of argument an epistemological model. This model depicts how religious disciplines are related to one another and to other academic disciplines. It suggests ways in which religious education can be combined with general education in a truly integrative fashion, thus re-focusing and uniting the fields of religious and general education.

One cannot advocate wholeness in education without addressing the structures that separate religious and general education. Thus a major part of the project deals with how the structures of society and education might be re-fashioned to allow for wholistic education. Specifically, a call is issued to the mainline Protestant churches to consider a pluralist model of education which might begin to reverse the trend that has divorced religious education from general education in our society.

Chapter 1 explains the assumptions upon which the

project is founded. Section II is the heart of the project and, necessarily, the longest. Section III deals with the implications and structural reordering which would need to take place before a wholistic curriculum could be implimented.

#### LIMITS OF THE PROJECT

This project proposes to merge educational enterprises which in the United States have been separated for nearly 200 years. It proposes that the way to effect such a merger is to adopt a pluralist model for structuring society. Before such a proposal could be implemented, much more work than can be accomplished in this project would be needed. Thus it seems appropriate to comment briefly on what the poject has not attempted to do, but which would be logical extensions of this study.

First, whereas the ultimate goal is to develop a comprehensive curriculum along the lines being proposed, this project is not a curriculum plan. The creation of such a curriculum deserves the expertise of many professionals from a variety of fields. A major contention of this project is that religious education needs to be integrated with general education. An integrated curriculum can only be achieved when religious educators work together with those in general education. This project attempts to define a basis upon which educators from the church and the wider

society can come together. It does not claim to have done their work for them.

Second, the fact that religious concerns impinge upon every academic discipline and, indeed, on every aspect of life is acknowledged. A truly integrative curriculum would be one that integrates religious concerns with all subjects and all life situations. While recognizing the need to move in this direction, this project has more modest goals. As a first step towards the larger goal, this project attempts to integrate the religious disciplines themselves, noting how they related to and can be integrated with so called secular disciplines. Though presenting a model of how all education fits together, this project focuses on the content to be included in Christian religious education. Integration in all areas is the ultimate goal and further work in this area is encouraged.

Third, since this project argues for religious education's rightful place within formal schooling, the focus is on children and adolescents rather than on adults - those persons whose education is mandated by law. The issues surrounding how to develop integrated educational programs for persons outside academic institutions is not addressed. The education of adults provides distinct challenges for this model since the time adults have to devote to educational endeavors is very limited. It is partly because there is so little opportunity for formal education outside of academic institutions that the need to

integrate religious and general education is so critical. Though the need for education throughout a lifetime is recognized, it is to be hoped that children might receive sufficient guidance during their required years of schooling that, as adults, they would naturally pursue knowledge wholistically.

Fourth, there are many pedagogical issues that educators must address. Besides attention to learning theory, instructional theory, and curriculum design, educators must be concerned for the social and political ramifications of the schooling process. It has long been acknowledged that these concerns are as important in religious education as in general education. The purpose of this project is neither to challenge nor to re-conceptualize educational theory. Rather, it points to the applicability of educational theory both within the religious and secular domains as evidence that they need not be separated.

Fifth, I do not assume to have laid to rest all the objections that might be raised against re-formulating the systems of education in this country along pluralistic lines. Regarding questions of legality that are sure to be raised, the reader is referred to the book, Society, State and Schools. This book, published by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, deals with these objections extensively. To deal thoroughly with all the ideological questions this proposal raises goes beyond the abilities of this author and the confines of the project. Change of the

sort being proposed does not come rapidly. But change can be expected, I hoped for, envisioned. It is the author's desire that this project might make a small contribution to change which will both make human life more meaningful and glorify God.

## CHAPTER 1

### ASSUMPTIONS

This project is based on two primary assumptions. The first is that all life has a religious dimension and thus so does all education. The second is that a new spirituality is emerging which integrates religious and secular concerns and thus prompts us towards a more wholistic approach to education. The purpose of this chapter is to present the rationale for these two assumptions.

#### THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF LIFE AND OF EDUCATION

It is not a new idea that there is a religious dimension intrinsic to all life. Historically, humanity has experienced, conceptualized and thought about life in religious terms. That which humanity has perceived as ultimately important or truly real, i.e., its fundamental presumptions, has been linked with the sacred. Religion has served to answer basic questions common to all persons: Why am I here? What am I to live for? How am I to live? Thus religion has served to bring order and purpose to life, dispelling meaninglessness and chaos.

Perhaps John Calvin said it best when he noted that human beings are "incurably religious".<sup>1</sup> More recently, Henry Zylstra has explained the religious dimension of life



in the following words:

...To be human is to be scientific, yes, and practical, and rational, and moral, and social, and artistic, but to be human further is to be religious also. And this religious in man is not just another facet of himself, just another side to his nature, just another part of the whole. It is the condition of all the rest and the justification of all the rest. This is inevitably and inescapably so for all men. No man is religiously neutral in his knowledge of and his appropriation of reality.<sup>2</sup>

Christian epistemology begins with the idea of God as the source of life and truth, who, through creation, has brought the universe into existence. The Christian doctrine of creation implies a wholism. The whole is more than any of its parts or even the sum of its parts. The various parts of the whole can be understood, not only in their relationship to one another, but primarily within an understanding of the whole. The parts are derived from the whole and therefore are not autonomous.<sup>3</sup>

God has not only created but ordered the world according to natural laws. The Creator God is also the Redeemer God and as such respects natural laws but is not confined by them. Both creation and redemption serve a single divine purpose - a purpose that is not altogether knowable to humanity. Karl Rahner has written:

In his spiritual existence, man will always have to fall back on a sacred mystery which in its inexpressible and therefore undefined perimeter permanently contains and sustains the small area of our knowing and doing in our daily experience.<sup>4</sup>

Because individuals are fundamentally religious, every society reflects communal religious convictions.

Rockne McCarthy, Donald Oppenwal, Wilfred Peterson and Gordon Spykman explain:

A community's multi-faceted culture is the concrete embodiment of its deepest spiritual allegiances. Every social issue is a human issue, and every human issue a religious issue. At bottom, all public policy is shaped by some "ultimate concern".<sup>5</sup>

Religion is not a choice, but a given not only for life in general but also for education. Education, consisting of the search for knowledge, wisdom and truth, is at heart a religious search. As George Albert Coe has said:

Religious education is not a part of general education, it is general education. It is the whole of which our so-called secular education is only a part or phase. Religious education alone takes account of the whole personality, of all its powers, all its duties, all its possibilities, and of the ultimate reality of the environment.<sup>6</sup>

From the above argument it is evident that knowledge is grounded in faith, whatever the tradition and content of that faith. Faith provides the rationale for epistemology; an understanding of our place in the universe. Religion serves to bring meaning to knowledge. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7) i.e., to sense the sacred mystery at the ground of our being is the first step in education. William K. Kay and Fred Hughes express the relationship of religion to education out of their Christian context:

For the Christian, the meaning of the universe is to be found with God, or, to put it another way, all those things which exist or have existed or will exist find their full reason for being in the will of God - and that will is most perfectly revealed in Christ. A Christian view of knowledge starts, then, from the premise that God, because he is God, gives all life

throughout space and time, its ultimate meaning and purpose. It is true, of course, that a more modest Christian view could deal with personal meanings and individual understandings, but once the reality of God is allowed, then either the material world or the rational powers of human beings have to be related to the transcendent and preferably both would be so related. Logically, once the existence of God is accepted, much else is explained: the purpose of history and the relation between humanity and the environment... Conversely, the acceptance of God's existence brings other problems to light: for example, why should there be evil and suffering, or is human free will reconcilable with divine foreknowledge?<sup>7</sup>

This view is distinctly and confessionally Christian.

Though it differs from the view of George Albert Coe cited above, both agree that no education can be separated from the religious dimensions of reality.

Richard John Neuhaus has noted that education is not only the process of passing on skills and information but is the transmission of values, of world views, of the overarching meaning systems by which people live.<sup>8</sup> An understanding of religion is integral to a full appropriation of insights available to students in all disciplines. Religious presuppositions provide an interpretive framework for all the forms of knowledge. Thus, no school is religiously neutral. Whether a religious perspective is acknowledged or not, every school builds its educational program on a particular world view and incorporates into that program values and meaning that are inherently religious.

It must also be acknowledged that religion is a part of one's life at every age. As one generation seeks

systematically to educate a younger generation, attention to the religious dimension of life needs to be given at every level. No educational institution is exempt from dealing with religious concerns and questions because persons at any age are susceptible to religious experience. Religion is integral to life. It must be recognized as integral to all education as well.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

In his book, Blessed Simplicity, Raimundo Panikkar speaks of the emergence of a new spirituality as it affects monastic life.<sup>9</sup> Panikkar notes that there is a general dissatisfaction with the status quo today. New movements, new religions, new patterns and sometimes the revival of old patterns are on the rise. Panikkar interprets these changes as pointing to an anthropological change regarding the awareness of the boundaries of personal being. These new boundaries have to do both with human conceptions of the Absolute and the physical world. The evolution of this new spirituality amounts to a mutation in human consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

Panikkar notes that the old spiritual model dealt with polarities.<sup>11</sup> It relativized all values in comparison to the quest for the Absolute and made them appear as secondary or evil. The old spirituality exalted the spiritual world and scorned the material world. It longed for the eternal and dealt contemptuously with the temporal.

It judged the body to be inferior to the soul, the natural to be inferior to the supernatural, the past to be inferior to the future. The old spirituality renounced the world and thus was indifferent to political concerns and neglected cultural values.

The result of this hierarchical type of spirituality is that it created a mindset that viewed reality in terms of good and evil, sacred and secular. The traditional religions that adopted this style of spirituality helped foster the idea that religious concerns existed in opposition to secular concerns. Religion became divorced from much of life. Churches encouraged their members to deny the world, resulting in an unhealthy otherworldliness that often turned religion into an alienating factor in human life.

Reacting against the otherworldly approach of hierarchical spirituality, people embraced the secular. A kind of reductionistic spirituality developed which viewed nature, culture, history, and humanity as the only true realities and religious concerns as illusory. But secularity, while recovering the value of the secular, produced problems of its own. Panikkar notes the deleterious impact that secularism has had on whole populations, turning individuals into quasi-robots, mechanizing human existence and converting the new religions of Marxism, humanism, secularism, scientism and the like into life-denying ideologies.<sup>12</sup>

Pannikar maintains that the alternative to a hierarchical spirituality that places spiritual concerns at the top of a descending order of values and a reductionistic spirituality that denies the existence of the spiritual world, is an integrating spirituality.<sup>13</sup> Such a spirituality is a fundamental way of relating to all reality, both natural and supernatural, in a way that is not dialectical. It deals with opposites but not polar opposites. Such opposites work to balance each other and can not be reduced to a good and evil scheme.

The challenge of what can be termed "incarnational" spirituality lies in the attempt to acquire the fullness of life through integrating complexities into a simplified unity. It assumes the compatibility of all that is, and the possible reconciliation of the disparate elements of reality. Panikkar speaks to the task of integrating complexities:

...Complexity, as the very word suggests, implies the result of "joining" all the elements so that they may fit together in a whole, in a concordant and superior unity. Complexity is only possible if the internal tendencies of the different constituent parts are not incompatible with one another and if, in the final instance, all of them form "parts" of a whole from which they have originated, or evolved, or become somewhat detached. Complexity as an ideal implies the belief that there is a supereminent unity holding everything together... Those who take the attitude of complexity believe that the structure of reality is pluralistic, so that you commit a sin of reductionism against reality if you attempt to reduce everything to a single principle. Reality is complex, and realization implies reaching the highest possible complexity.<sup>14</sup>

Panikkar notes that secularity is the fundamental

feature of the new spirituality.<sup>15</sup> Incarnational spirituality is secular in the sense that it affirms that the body, history, the material world, and temporal values in general are definitive and insuperable - although not exclusive or complete. A concern for the secular is merged with a concern for the sacred. Both are viewed as belonging to the very center of reality. The new spirituality values the secular without diminishing the value of the sacred.

Panikkar writes:

This change is of no little import because it announces to us in no uncertain terms that the separation between the holy and the secular is no longer sustainable, or at the very least, that temporality with all its consequences is as holy as that which traditionally was maintained apart from the noise of the world and the servile chores of temporal affairs,...The secular is no longer that which is fleeting, provisional, perishable, contingent, and so forth, but is rather the very clothing of the permanent, the eternal, and the immutable...It is with the redemption of this life and not any other that we are dealing, as the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh will remind Christians...<sup>16</sup> True life is hidden in our present everyday existence.

Thus the new spirituality does not set people apart from the world but integrates them into the whole. Concerns for the body, politics, science and human history are viewed as belonging to the perfection of persons in wholeness. Incarnational spirituality sees working for the betterment of the temporal world and the transformation of the external structures of reality as a calling equally as high as the striving for individual perfection.<sup>17</sup>

Incarnational spirituality is communal by nature. It recognizes that we cannot attain our human fullness apart

from the fullness of nature and all peoples. The great religious problems today involve the whole human community and the natural world as well: war, hunger, peace, justice, equity, sustainability, and human dignity. Humanity must attend to the well-being of the earth and the human community by involving ourselves in the crucial problems the world faces.

That the world is not evil, that it is legitimate to become involved in temporal affairs, that the physical world has positive value, and that the religious person must occupy him/herself with reforming the very socio-political structures of society, is basic to the new spirituality. Incarnational spirituality maintains that to be engaged in the perfection of the cosmos is not vanity, but the fullest realization of the person. It is within such engagement that we find God.

In comparing the old and the new spiritualities, one may say that the former stressed a change in consciousness, and the latter a change in external structures. Each of the spiritualities affirm that the core of being is simple. But whereas the old spirituality worked at simplicity by transcendence and secularism worked at simplicity by immanence, the new spirituality seeks simplicity through integration and harmonious complexity. Simplicity on the ultimate level, it maintains, is only possible if the multiplicity is but the fruit of a single reality unfolding.<sup>18</sup>

Thus incarnational spirituality rejects dualism and



reductionism. Panikkar summarizes:

The crisis of our contemporary human period, and at the same moment its great opportunity and vocation, is to realize that the human microcosm and the material macrocosm are not two separate worlds, but one and the same cosmotheandric reality, in which precisely the third "divine" dimension is the unifying link between the other two dimensions of reality. Otherwise, to withdraw into the business of saving one's soul becomes sheer egoism or cowardice, and to fling oneself into the task of saving the world sheer vanity or presumption.

Now, in order to realize the synthesis, we have to become increasingly aware not only of the correlation between inner and outer, human and cosmic aspects of reality, but of their inter-relatedness, so that ultimately it is one and the same concern... All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony, there is a constant thread in the human quest for sacred secularity.<sup>19</sup>

The kinds of shifts that Panikkar recognizes as indications of a new emerging spirituality are not limited to a single geographic area, particular religions or even theological persuasions. Panikkar notes how the monastic orders in all faiths are feeling its effects. Incarnational spirituality is emerging in both Protestantism and Catholicism, both conservative and liberal branches of the church. Vatican II represented a shift in this direction. Feminist theology and liberation theology can be linked to incarnational spirituality. But so, too, is the new fundamentalist concern for politics. The women's movement, the civil rights, movement, and the ecological movement all can be viewed as having their roots in incarnational spirituality. This is not to suggest that there are not still differences in perspective, for there certainly are. But the fundamental way we conceive of reality is changing.

Incarnational spirituality gives us a basis for understanding this change.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>As quoted by Gordon Spykman et al, Society State and Schools (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 148.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Zylstra, Testament of Vision (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 145, as quoted in ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert W. Byrne, A Christian Approach to Education (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961) 69.

<sup>4</sup>As quoted by William E. Brown and Andrew M. Greeley, Can Catholic Schools Survive? (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970) 27.

<sup>5</sup>Spykman, 148.

<sup>6</sup>As quoted by Jack Seymour, Robert T. O'Gorman and Charles R. Foster, The Church in the Education of the Public (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984) 110.

<sup>7</sup>William K. Kay and Fred Hughes, "Christian Light on Education," Religious Education 80 (1985) 60.

<sup>8</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, "Educational Diversity in Post-Secular America," Religious Education 77 (1982) 316.

<sup>9</sup>Kaimundo Panikkar, Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype (New York: Seabury Press, 1982)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 131

## SECTION II - CONTENT

Just as incarnational spirituality is being lived out by many today who are not self-conscious about it, so too is education being shaped by it. As of yet there is little understanding of how the various concerns prompted by this emerging spirituality fit together, or the possible far reaching effect it will have on the church and society. Christian religious education, let alone general education, has not yet become intentional about designing its programs to fit a new style of spirituality, despite the fact that both see the need to move in new directions. Thus, education presently lacks a clear vision, resulting in an unbalanced approach to the selection and presentation of subject matter.

But how do we arrive at clarity and balance? What is it, fundamentally, that needs to be integrated? In what way can education combine the secular with the sacred? What does the harmonious complexity and pluralistic simplicity, of which Panikkar speaks, look like educationally? An examination of these questions and a proposal for an educational approach based on incarnational spirituality is the focus of the next section.

## CHAPTER 2

## AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL MODEL

## AFFECTIVE/COGNITIVE INTEGRATION

Many of the changes being called for in Christian religious education today result from an awareness of the need to integrate the affective and the cognitive aspects of thinking in our educational endeavors. These calls for reform rest on recent scientific research on the human brain.<sup>1</sup> Such research has concluded that there are two ways of thinking which interrelate in each person.<sup>2</sup> Scientists have produced evidence that the human brain has two hemispheres joined by a large bundle of connecting fibers.<sup>3</sup> The left side of the body is controlled by the right side of the brain and the right side of the body is controlled by the left side of the brain. More importantly, each hemisphere of the brain specializes in particular mental functions.

The left side for most people (all this is probably reversed for left handed people) controls verbal ability, logical reasoning and analytical thinking.<sup>4</sup> The ability to speak, write, and think linearly is guided by this side of the brain. The right side of the brain controls artistic ability, intuition reasoning and holistic thinking. A person's ability to imagine, create, and think relationally

is guided by the right side of the brain. Each side complements the other and it is the integration of both sides of consciousness which is responsible for the highest human achievements.

Scientists have discovered that the two hemispheres of the brain naturally function together within small children.<sup>5</sup> However, it is possible for one side of the brain to become more highly developed resulting in a lopsided mental development. The process whereby one hemisphere develops to the detriment of the other is a result of acculturation. When society values one mode of thinking over another, a lopsided mental development is bound to occur. Brain hemisphere specialization develops thereby limiting full consciousness.

### History and the Present Situation

Those of us in the United States today live in a culture that has valued left brain functions above right brain functions. That is to say, society places greater importance on science, logic and critical reflection than on the arts, and affective and intuitive reasoning. As Tocqueville has said, "We are a nation that prefers the useful to the beautiful, a nation in which education is a means to something else and not an end in itself."<sup>6</sup> Such valuing dramatically affects our educational endeavors.

This imbalance in education has a long history.

Tolbert McCarroll traces the roots of such imbalance back to the fourth century when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup> However, popular religion in the Middle Ages probably depended more on left brain thinking than right brain. The illiterate masses expressed their religion through the arts: dance, drama, music, and visual arts. They turned to mysticism rather than theology for guidance. It was the domination of the affective mode and slighting of the cognitive mode that gave rise to superstitions and demonology. Not until the time of the Enlightenment and the Reformation did the attack on right brain learning and knowing become sustained.

As McCarroll points out, there is nothing like an inquisition to turn a person into a proper-thinking Christian.<sup>8</sup> However, other factors combined to increase reliance on left brain thinking. Increased literacy and the availability of books written in the vernacular made religious concepts more available to ordinary people. The faithful began to rely more and more upon formal instruction, often in a tutorial or classroom environment. Rationalism was seen as the antidote to superstition and the emotional excesses which over-reliance upon the affective mode of thinking had created.

The founding of the United States as a nation took place in an age of reason. The first European settlers in the colonies brought with them a desire to escape from culture as they knew it. As John Westerhoff points out,

the Puritans brought the Reformation rather than the Renaissance.<sup>9</sup> Art existed for utilitarian and decorative purposes only. National attention in education and other aspects of social life was directed towards enlightenment values.

From the beginning, then, education in the United States by church and society has tended to separate right brain and left brain functions and emphasize the latter. The result is that both forms of education have been primarily concerned with the mastery of cognitive skills and the direct transmission of information, facts, concepts, and analytical skills. There has been a heavy reliance on verbal material, rigid lesson plans and discipline. Right brain functions, if focused on at all, have been viewed as supplementary. Little attention has been given to the senses, imagination, creativity, mystery and awe. This leads Westerhoff to conclude that "while many creative teaching methods are being employed, religious education is primarily focused on the discovery of the general, the universal, and the abstract, rather than on the idiosyncratic, the concrete and the experiential."<sup>10</sup> He views Christian religious education as still dominantly verbal, conceptual and analytic. The development of the intellect is primary with little attention given to intuition and the affections.



### The Need for Integration in Religious Education

Tolbert McCarroll claims that there are serious consequences when one side of the brain is developed at the expense of the other.<sup>11</sup> He sees the separation of the two modes of consciousness as having crippled the church and limited personal spiritual development. Religious education is too often identified with orthodoxy - right beliefs or right doctrines. Westerhoff agrees and claims that by mirroring general education and reflecting the culture's dominant concern for the intellect, religious education has unconsciously contributed to making the religious life more difficult and for some nearly impossible.<sup>12</sup> Westerhoff holds that religious education must focus first of all on stimulating a person's visual, oral and kinetic senses. He recommends that we acknowledge ourselves as volitional, sensate beings. Such an acknowledgement will necessitate radical changes in our educational programs. Westerhoff writes:

Religious faith demands that we learn to sense and respond to the presence of God through means other than reason. Education requires that we help persons regain their God-given ability to wonder and create; to dream, fantasize, imagine, and envision; to sing, paint, dance, and act; their natural capacity for ecstasy, for appreciating the new, the marvelous, the mysterious, and for sensual and kinesthetic awareness; their God-given talent to express themselves emotionally and non-verbally.<sup>13</sup>

While enthusiasm for rediscovering the importance of right brain functions for Christian religious education is

increasing, a warning needs to be issued against trying to arrive at integration through movement in a single direction. It is tempting to ride a pendulum from one extreme to the other. Unfortunately, this only results in extremism. Today there is a need to emphasize right brain functions because they have been ignored far too long in Western society. But we also need to keep uppermost in our minds that we are striving for balance.

Additionally, objections must be raised to the assumption that the spiritual model by which the church has designed its educational efforts is primarily cognitive. The old model (hierarchical spirituality) allowed for the exercise of the affective mode of thinking. Mysticism and eschatology which were fundamental aspects of the old spirituality are certainly affective in nature. Thus it is not simply the integration of the cognitive and the affective with which we are dealing in the new spirituality.

#### THE INTEGRATION OF THE RELATIONAL, CONCEPTUAL, RATIONAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL MODES OF KNOWING

That brain research has only thus far succeeded in identifying two dimensions of the human brain does not mean that there are only two ways in which human beings obtain knowledge and find meaning in life. In the book, Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing, the National Society for the Study of Education has identified no less than eight modes of knowing.<sup>14</sup> In the article he contributes to the

volume, Dwayne Heubner notes that every mode of knowing is a mode of being open, vulnerable and available to the internal and external world.<sup>15</sup> For Heubner every mode of knowing is also a mode of being in relationship, of hopefulness and expectancy, of participating in the continual creation of the universe, and of transcendence. Huebner indicates that all modes of knowing share a common search for meaning and life's significance.

But what Huebner's article and the book as a whole fail to do is define how the various modes of knowing are related to each other. That is, it fails to provide an image of the whole of which the various modes of knowing are a part. It is such an image of the whole which is the strength of Herbert W. Byrne's book, A Christian Approach to Education.<sup>16</sup> Byrne is firmly convinced that there must be a wholistic approach to education and curriculum construction. Education must concern itself with integration as the means of unifying and bringing the parts of knowledge together. Byrne presents numerous diagrams to suggest how the various modes of knowing and academic disciplines are related.

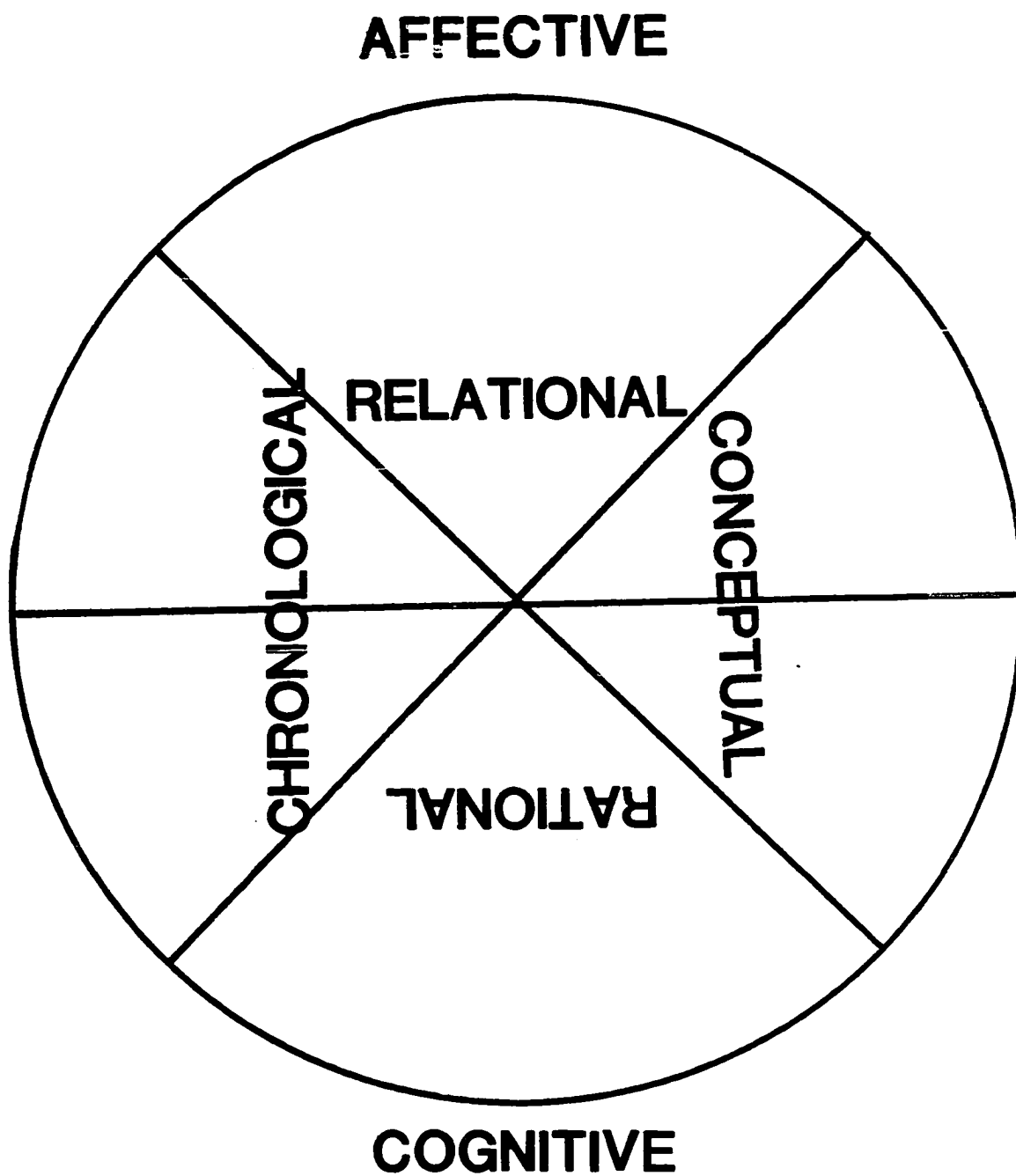
While the thrust of what Byrne is doing in trying to conceptualize education wholistically is commendable, his model is inadequate. Byrne attempts to build a bibliocentric theory of curriculum.<sup>17</sup> He views the Bible as the divine catalyst that holds truth together and gives life significance. The basic premise is that the Bible is central to all courses of study. The Bible illumines all

other studies. The primary task of education, according to Byrne, is to bring the student to know and experience the truth of the Bible.

Byrne's model is based on hierarchical spirituality which views religious knowledge as superior to other forms of knowledge. It is authoritarian rather than dialogical and in this sense cannot be seen as truly integrative. It is primarily a closed system, since the Bible is considered by Byrne to be a closed canon. Indoctrination rather than openness to truth is the final result of such a model.

What is needed is to bring the epistemological insights of Huebner and the National Society for the Study of Education together with Byrne's concern for wholeness and integration. An epistemology based upon what has been identified as incarnational spirituality moves in this direction.

Epistemologically four general ways of deriving meaning can be identified. Two of these cut across the affective-cognitive dimensions of the brain. (See Diagram 1) First, human beings reason. We can use our cognitive ability to reason about the physical world around us, about ourselves, and even about the metaphysical realm. This mode of knowing is fully cognitive. Second, we relate to the world. Our relationships center around others, self, and God. This mode of knowing is fully affective. Thirdly, we perceive reality chronologically in terms of the past, present and future. This mode of knowing integrates

**Diagram 1**

cognitive linear reasoning with affective spacial experiencing. Fourthly, we create meaning conceptually. The brain's creative ability to imagine and its rational ability to deduce meaning again combines the cognitive and affective modes of knowing.

Though it is possible to separate out these four distinct modes of knowing for purposes of analysis and clarification, they cannot be separated functionally. Just as it was previously noted that the two hemispheres of the brain function together, so it is that the four modes of knowing naturally function together.

Each of these modes of knowing can be viewed as a continuum along which there is movement from the concrete to the abstract. Developmental psychology has documented how this movement progresses. Developmentalists have discovered that newborn infants live in a world that is totally undifferentiated.<sup>18</sup> They have no sense of time, no sense of separateness from their surroundings, indeed, no sense of self. They react to stimuli rather than reason.<sup>19</sup> It is a gradual awareness of and curiosity about that which is outside and separate from themselves which is the beginning of knowledge. In his book summarizing the work of Jean Piaget, John H. Flavell writes:

...it is by penetrating deeper into the fabric of reality that self-knowledge becomes possible. Thus... cognition always begins on the margins of both self and milieu and works its way simultaneously into the inner regions of each.<sup>20</sup>

Knowledge, as Piaget has shown, is a process of

discovering and relating that which is external to that which is internal. In the beginning only that which is perceived as concrete can be assimilated. However, as a person matures, abstract thought becomes possible. Such abstract thought grows out of and is based on what Piaget terms "concrete operations". Since religious knowledge is dependent on an ability for abstract thought,<sup>21</sup> it is theorized that religious knowledge grows out concrete thought. This growth occurs not only in terms of a maturation of the thought process (concrete -> abstract) but also in terms of the subjects to which one's thinking is directed. Subjects that require the ability for abstract thought emerge out of those for which concrete operational thinking was sufficient.

In terms of the modes of knowledge, we can say that it is a relationship to others and oneself upon which a relationship with God is based. It is reasoning about the physical world and that which is distinctively human that leads to reasoning about the metaphysical realm.

In like manner, child psychology has discovered that images precede symbols.<sup>22</sup> An image is a perception of reality which initially is tied to the physical senses. In order to communicate that which has been perceived human beings construct symbols systems. Symbols serve to convey meaning outwardly of what has been perceived inwardly. Thus in teaching a child to speak, to count, or to read, symbols must be linked to concrete images. Through image and symbol

individuals go on to construct their ideology or world view. Concepts of time also move from the concrete to the abstract. They begin with a perception of sequence. In the concrete operations stage, children begin to recognize that what has happened in the past has meaning for what is currently happening. Building on what has happened in the past and the present, persons begin to imagine the future.<sup>23</sup>

By the time a child passes from what Piaget terms the sensory-motor period to the period of concrete operations he/she has made the distinctions between image and symbol, other and self, the physical and the human, past and present. The transition from concrete operations to formal operations marks the point at which one begins to relate personally to God, conceive of the ideal, reason about metaphysics and imagine the future. From this point onward, a person grows and matures in understanding by moving back and forth on the relational, conceptual, rational and chronological continua. The past informs the present and the future, as the future guides the present and the past. The physical world informs our ideas about humanity and the metaphysical world just as our reasoning about the metaphysical realm provides insight for understanding human life and the physical world. Our images and symbols give rise to our ideology and our ideology fosters new symbols and images. Our relationship to others informs our self understanding and our relationship to God, while at the same time our relationship to God informs our



self understanding and how we are to relate to others. The present, the human, our symbols, and our sense of self are the mediating points through which we move back and forth on the continua. (See Diagram 2)

Many examples could be given to clarify the relationship in all four areas. Hopefully the reader will be able to understand the principle by attending to this one example: a baby's initial experience of being mothered by another who is separate and distinct from the self has a direct effect on how the child will begin to experience him/herself and God. If children experience others as loving and trustworthy, they experience themselves as valuable and secure. In turn, they will most likely experience God as loving and trustworthy.<sup>24</sup> If children experience others as distant and untrustworthy, they experience themselves as of little value and highly insecure. Their experience of God, colored by their first experiences with others, is of a Being who is also distant and untrustworthy. Yet, if one can, in later life, experience God as loving and trustworthy, a person's own self understanding can be transformed and even one's fundamental experience of others. Thus what is at first a movement in one direction, can become a movement in the opposite direction. But the movement will always follow the continuum. One cannot jump from a new experience of God to a new experience of others without first achieving a new sense of self.

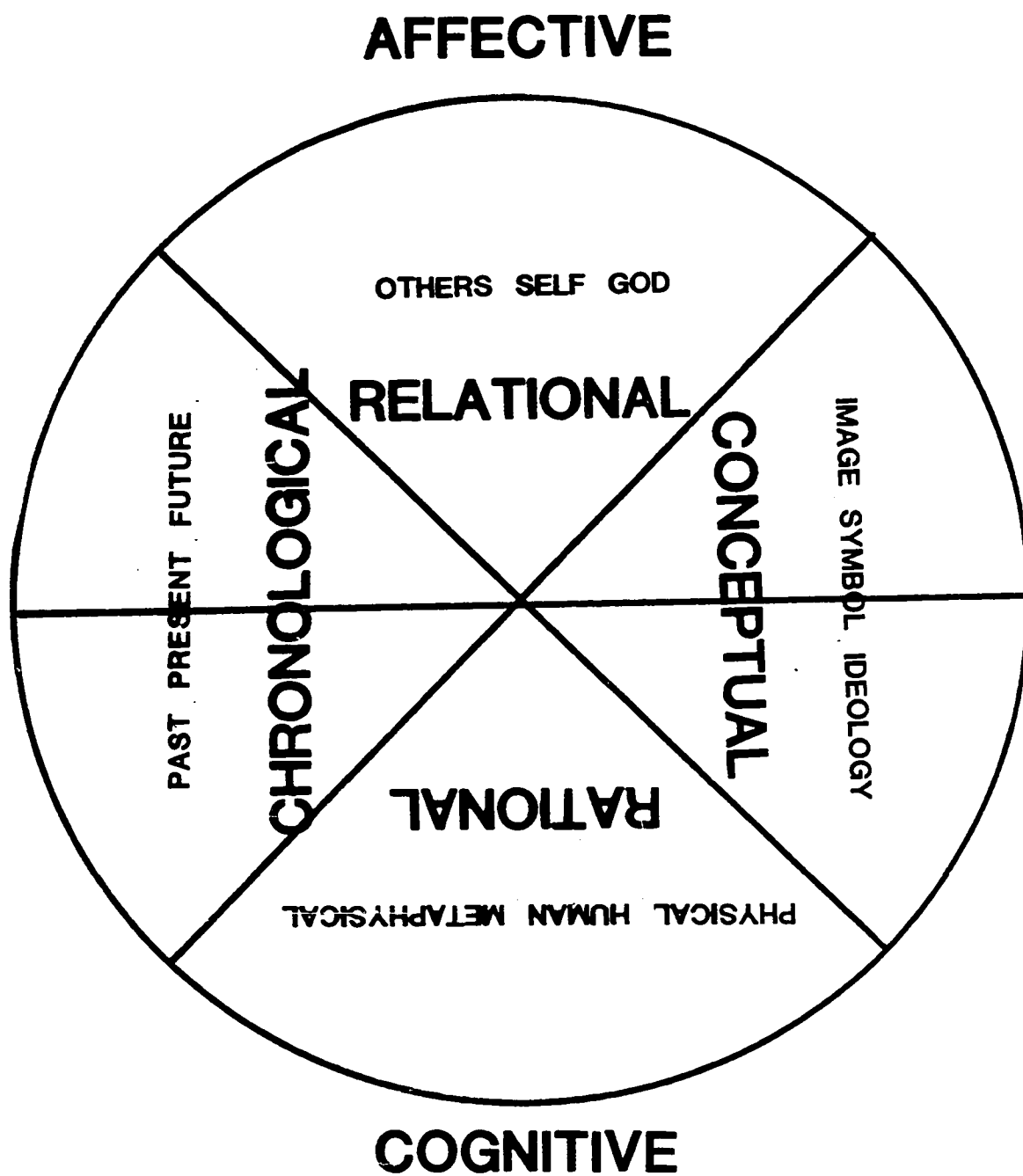


Diagram 2

### The Relationship Between Academic Disciplines

Once we understand how other, self and God are related; how image, symbol and ideology are related; how the physical, the human and the metaphysical are related; how the past, present, and future are related - we can begin to understand how certain academic disciplines are related. For example, the study of the physical world leads to science. The study of human life leads to philosophy. And the study of the metaphysical world leads to metaphysics or theology. In the same way, then, that the physical, the human, and the metaphysical are related, so too are science, philosophy and theology related. Philosophy and theology are built upon one's knowledge of the physical world, i.e., science. Diagram 3 shows the disciplines that grow out of the four continua, how they are related to one another and where they fall in terms of the four modes of knowing.

There is, within each mode of knowing, that which has been viewed as a sacred and a secular discipline. For instance, it has seemed perfectly appropriate for so called secular educational institutions to teach politics, art, science and history. Yet the study of mysticism, doctrine, theology and eschatology has been prohibited. This difference between secular and sacred subject matter is not a result of a different kind of brain activity as Westerhoff and McCarroll seem to maintain, but is the difference

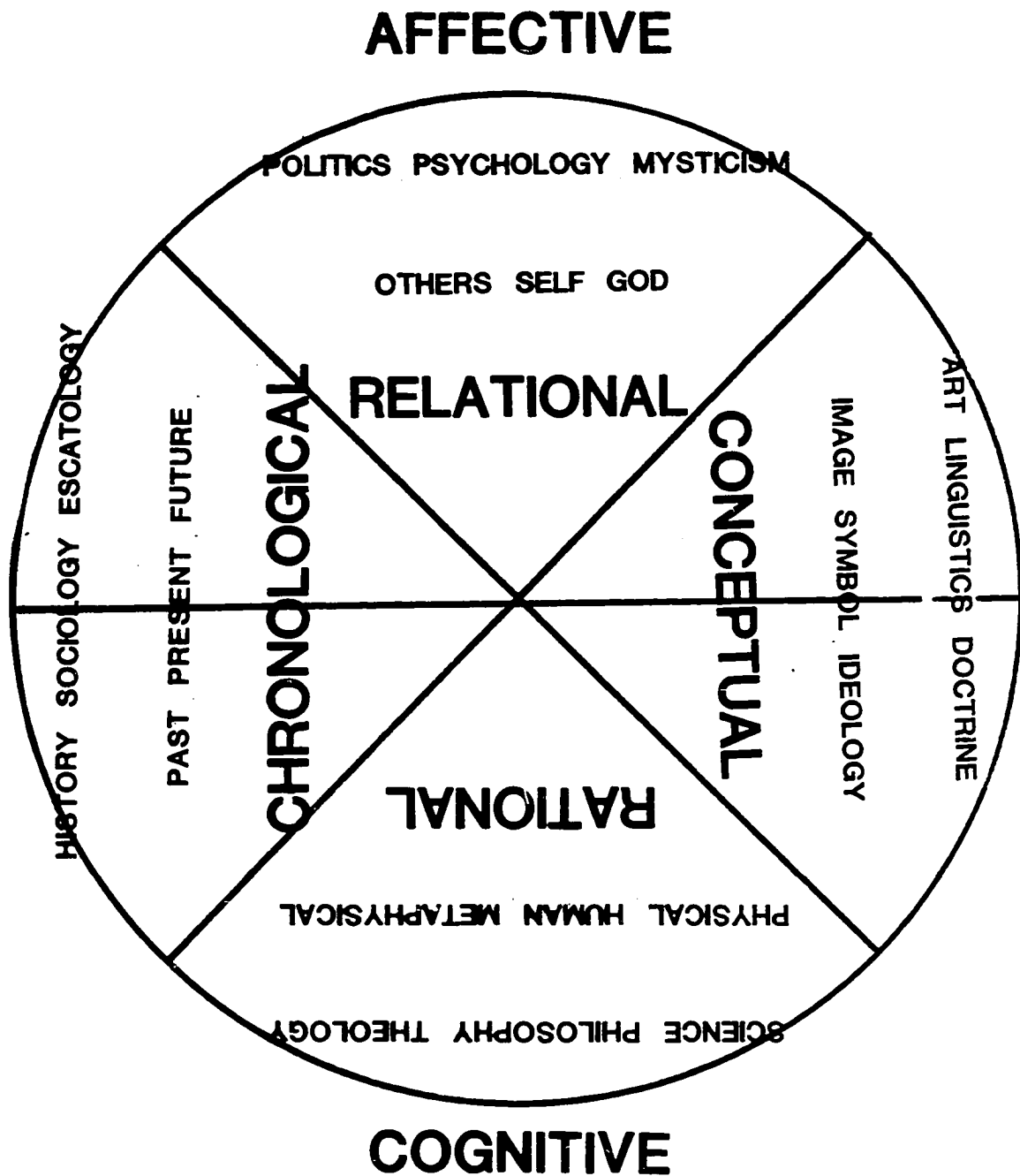


Diagram 3

between the two ends of the spectra or continua. All modes of knowing are equally religious and secular. It cannot be maintained that affective right brain thinking is any more religious than cognitive left brain thinking. What can be maintained is that religious thinking presupposes and is initially built on that which can be viewed as secular. And that which is viewed as secular can be infused with sacred meaning. To try and divide the sacred from the secular is to sever that which otherwise naturally follows.

#### Academic Relationships Within Various Spiritualities

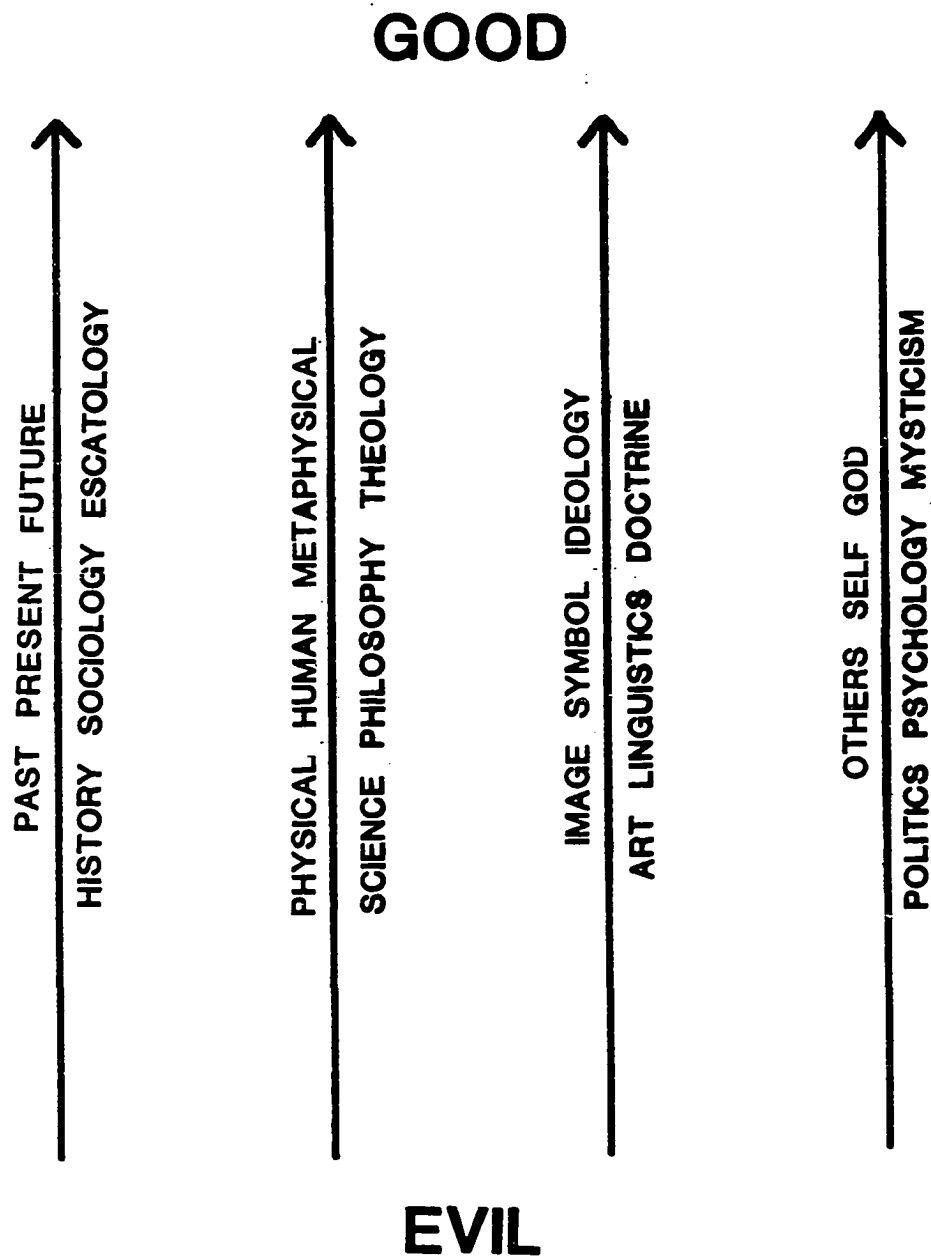
The warning to be issued is not so much that education has over-emphasized the cognitive to the detriment of the affective (though this is true), but that the natural development from the secular to the sacred has been curtailed, thus restricting the normal movement back and forth along the continua, and thereby curtailing growth in all areas. Such a curtailment is a result of the churches' hierarchical spirituality which concerns itself educationally with mysticism, doctrine, theology, and eschatology and wants nothing to do with politics, art, science, and history. It is also the result of academia's reductionistic spirituality which reduces what is knowable to that which can be perceived through the physical senses. Both spiritualities not only give little attention to the relationship between the sacred and the secular but also

fail to recognize how the various aspects of knowledge (i.e., the relational, conceptual, rational and chronological) relate to each other. (See Diagram 4)

Reductionistic spirituality which arose in opposition to hierarchical spirituality, can also be diagrammed according to the four modes of knowing. (See Diagram 5) In this schema, politics, art, science, and history are seen as the only worthwhile educational pursuits since these subjects are concerned with the real and knowable as opposed to that which is unreal and unknowable. Again, there is little appreciation of how the secular and sacred are related within particular modes of knowledge or how these modes are related.

Educational theories based on both hierarchical and reductionistic spirituality have shown some concern for psychology, language, philosophy and sociology, although these subjects were not seen as primary. Naturally, a claim for the more central importance of these disciplines gave rise to yet a third type of spirituality. This third spirituality recognizes the importance and the relationship between the sacred and the secular. This spirituality, which can be termed humanistic, has been the basis upon which the church and academia have most often worked in cooperation. Psychology, linguistics, philosophy and sociology have, for example, been used as foundations for Christian religious education. As Diagram 3 shows, these disciplines are the mediating disciplines within the four

# HIERARCHIAL SPIRITUALITY



**Diagram 4**

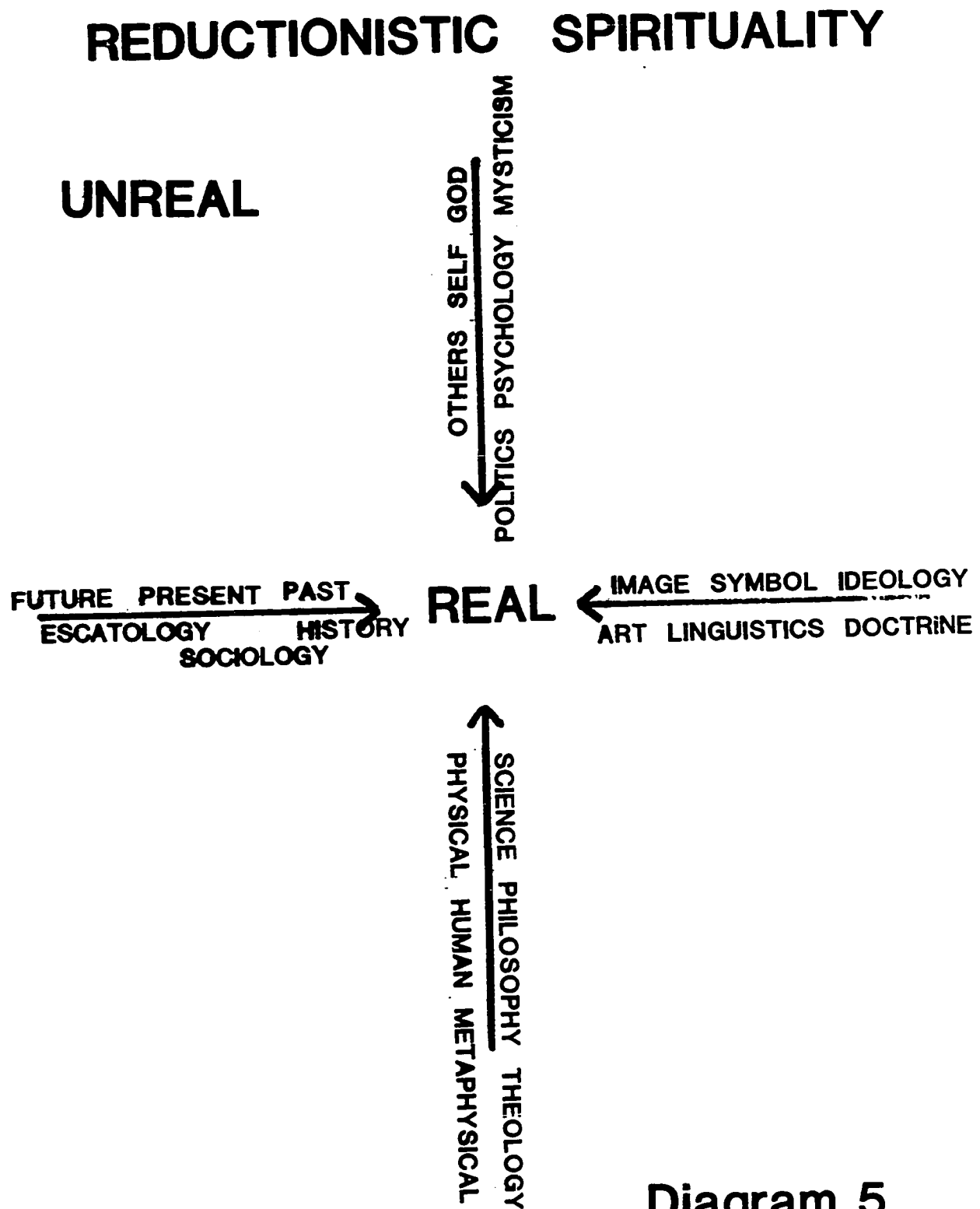


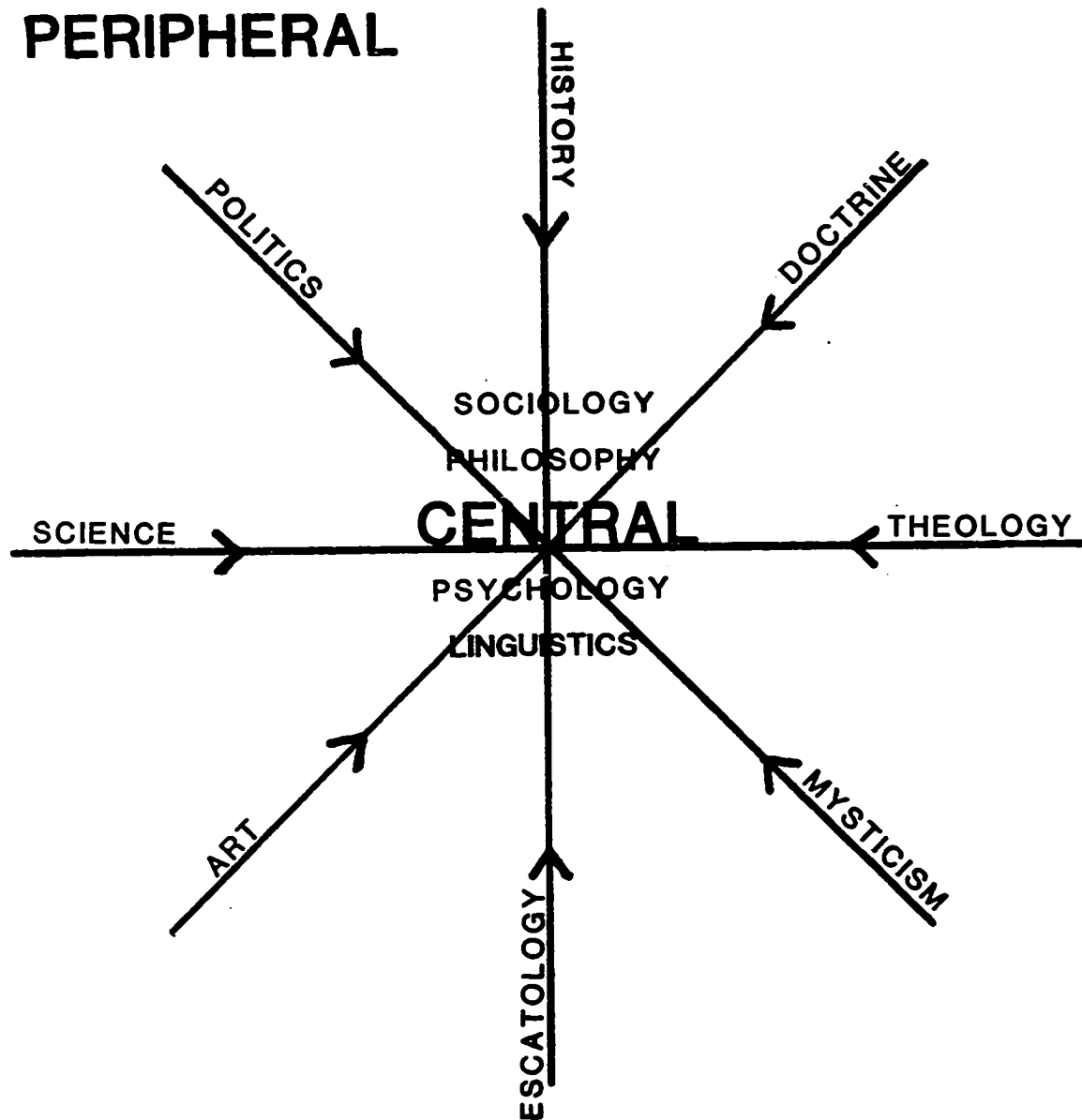
Diagram 5



modes of knowing and grow out of the mediating points of the self, symbols, the human and the present. Religious education makes use of secular scholarship in these areas to elucidate religious meaning. Likewise, some secular scholars are aware of the religious dimensions of their work. For example, Carl Jung was very sensitive to the religious dimension of psychology.

The problem with the third model of spirituality is that it has given rise to humanism (which focuses on the human over and above the physical and metaphysical realms), presentism (which shows greater appreciation for the present over and above the past or future) and individualism (which concerns itself with personal welfare over and above community concerns). The self, the human, the present and cultural symbols are given primary importance. While liberal Christianity has reacted against the individualism that this spirituality fosters, conservative Christianity has reacted against what it sees as the dangers of humanism. Presentism, a concern for the present in disregard for the past or the future, is probably equally as disparaged among conservative and liberal Christians. This way of integrating the sacred and the secular is not sufficient to account for what has been described as incarnational spirituality.

# HUMANISTIC SPIRITUALITY



**Diagram 6**

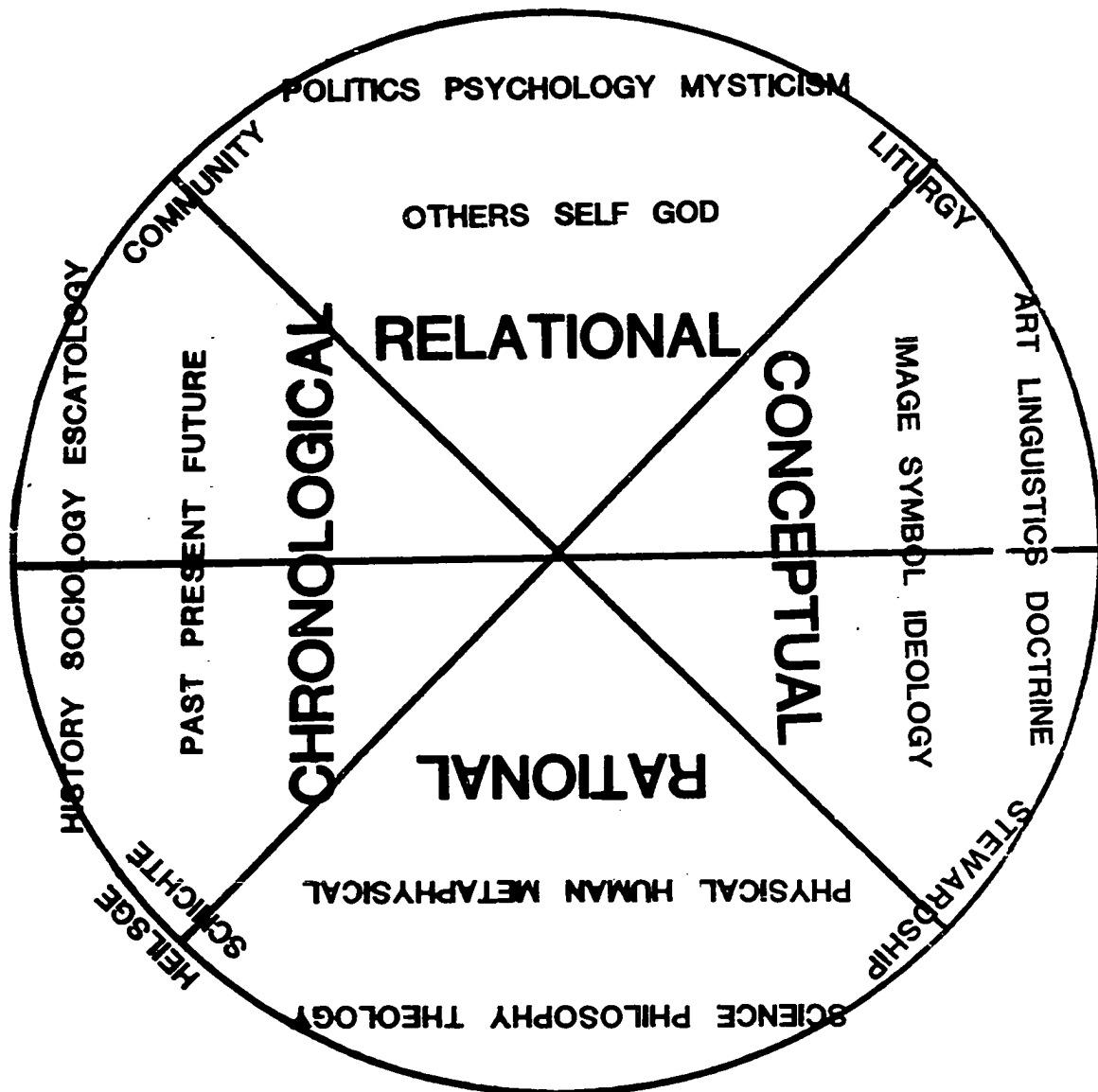
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BASED ON INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

There is yet another way of working towards integration which not only integrates the sacred and secular, but also integrates the four modes of knowledge. This is what may be classified as incarnational spirituality. Incarnational spirituality recognizes, along with humanistic spirituality, the continua along which human knowledge moves but unlike the latter, it sees the potential for integrating the modes of knowing so as to provide a deeper sort of integration. Diagram 7 illustrates that the focus for an incarnational approach to education would be on community (integrating eschatology and politics), liturgy (integrating mysticism and art), stewardship (integrating doctrine and science), and Heilsgeschichte (integrating theology and history). In this way the new spirituality attempts to merge that which has traditionally been considered a secular discipline with a sacred discipline while at the same time integrating modes of thought.

To propose that community, liturgy, stewardship and Heilsgeschichte have not been a part of the educational efforts of the church all along would be naive and erroneous. But what is new in this approach is an understanding of community that is clearly eschatological and political. What is new is an understanding of liturgy that places emphasis on mysticism and art. What is new is stewardship pursued doctrinally and scientifically. What is

# INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

## AFFECTIVE



## COGNITIVE

Diagram 7

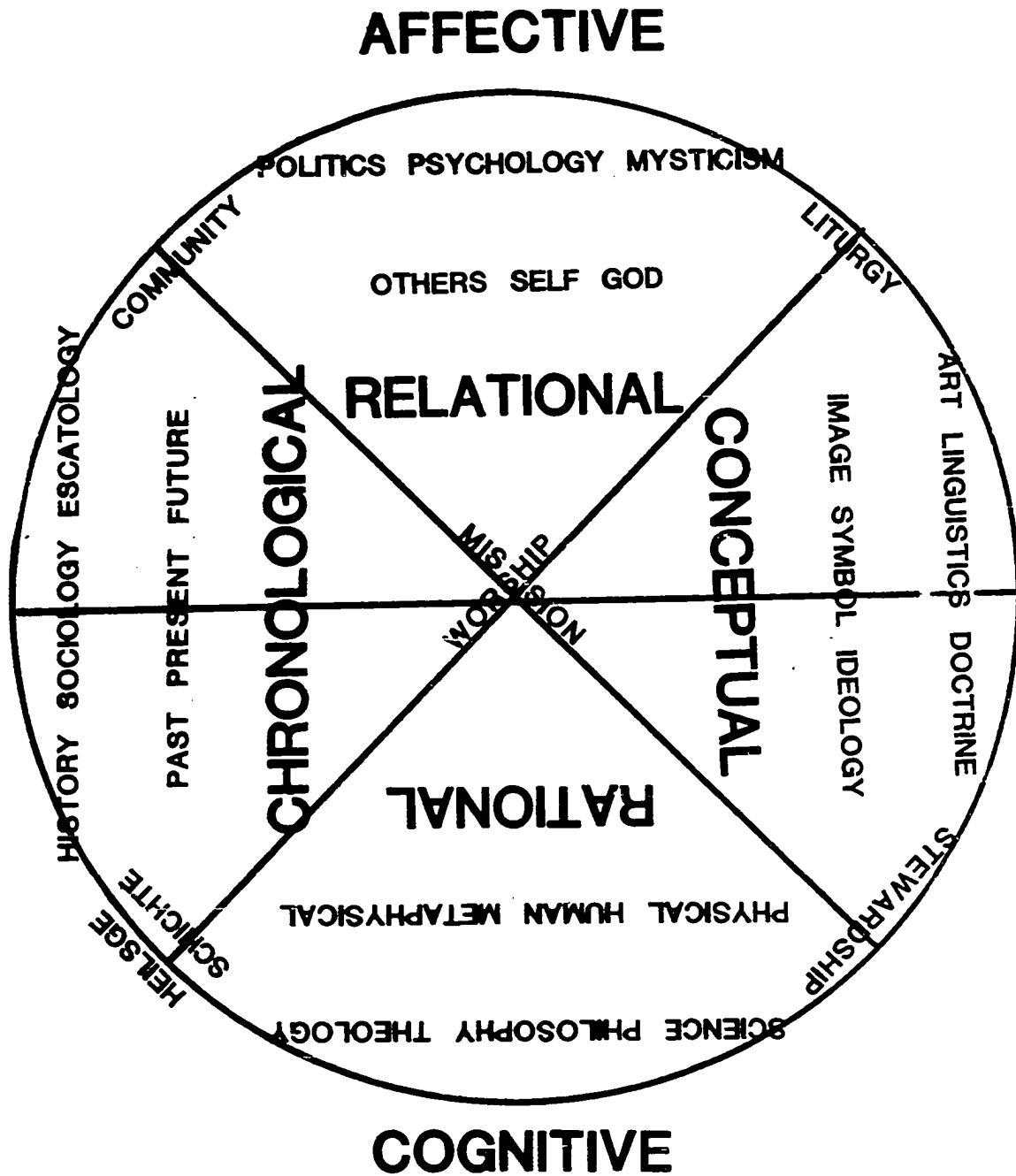
new is an understanding of Heilsgeschichte as a continuing concern to relate theology and history.

One of the advantages of the model I have presented is that it helps us to see that "religion" is not a single discipline. Religious meaning falls within each mode of knowing. Attention needs to be given to developing each mode so that balance is maintained. Inattention to any one mode causes it to be underdeveloped thus limiting the mind's ability to function at its highest level. Though religious meaning can be perceived through any one mode, the goal of religious education should be to explore life's meaning via all modes of thought. Any one mode by itself has limits and could lead to distortion and fanaticism. To work towards thoroughly integrating the four modes of knowing is to be aware not only of the limitations of each one but the heights to which persons rise when one's thinking is fully integrated.

### Worship and Mission

The model being developed also helps us to see that religion can be thought of as essentially two intersecting movements that tie together four disciplines. (See Diagram 8) The first movement is worship (which has traditionally integrated mysticism and theology but which, within the new spirituality, is shifted towards liturgy and Heilsgeschichte). The second movement is mission (which traditionally

# INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY



**Diagram 8**

integrated doctrine and eschatology but which, within the new spirituality, is shifted towards stewardship and community).

Worship and mission are the means by which religion helps persons to answer two basic questions which, Dr. James Sanders contends, everyone faces.<sup>25</sup> The questions are "Who am I?" and "What am I to do?" The search for answers to these questions is a search for life's meaning. The first question concerns a person's identity and leads to worship. Identity is shaped externally and internally. In worship attention is given both to the accumulated historical/cultural wisdom concerning ultimate values by which person's identity is shaped externally, and individuals' unique present experiences of the ultimate by which person's identity is shaped internally. Thus Heilsgeschichte serves to establish external identity and liturgy serves to establish internal identity. Both are a part of worship.

The second question is the missiological question. Another way of stating it is, "What is my mission in life?" Again the model being developed proposes that answers to this question move in two directions on the same plane. Thus, the answers I am to be a steward of the creation and I am to be a builder of human community are not different answers to the question but two equally valid and necessary ways of answering the question. How human beings are to relate to the physical and natural world is a distinction, but not a separate concern, from how human beings are to

relate to one another. Whereas we are stewards of the created world, stewardship is not appropriate language for speaking of human relationships. And whereas community captures the goal of human relationships, it is inadequate for explaining human responsibility for the natural world. Stewardship and community both deal with moral and ethical questions. Love, respect and reverence are called for whether we are focusing on our relationship with nature, animals, or other human beings. Caring for and furthering God's creation; building the Kingdom of God on earth (which is to say, building community) meaningfully answers the question, "What am I to do?"

In summary, religious education curricula need to be broad enough to first integrate religious knowledge with the secular; secondly, to tie together the the two aspects within worship and mission; and, finally, to be aware of their intersection.

#### Scripture: A Fifth Mode of Knowing

Up until now religious education has been addressed rather than Christian education. This is because the model is intended to be generic. The four modes of knowing are universal to humankind. Every religion deals in some manner with mysticism, doctrine, theology and eschatology. In adjusting to incarnational spirituality, religious instruction in any and all faith traditions needs to concern itself



with the four areas of liturgy, Heilsgeschichte, stewardship and community as it seeks to educate new generations into a life of worship and mission.

But religions deal with particulars as well as universals. There is yet one more subject that religious education must incorporate into curricula: scripture. When the move is made to the study of scripture, religious education is no longer dealing with what is common to all humanity, but rather with that which is distinctive and identity forming for a particular people. While it is the particularity that divides and separates people, it is also that which initially grounds them and allows faith to grow.

In his article, "Religious Education and Cultural Pluralism," Donald Miller notes that identity formation is a primary goal of religious education.<sup>26</sup> Identity, says Miller, is defined against boundaries. It is based upon structure and shaped by ideological commitments.<sup>27</sup> It is a product of social interaction, of identification with and commitment to a particular people. The community to which one belongs tells one who he/she is and what constitutes the limits of permissible behavior. Although liberation may be the goal of religious experience, it is achieved through enslaving commitments - and perhaps ultimately through repression.<sup>28</sup>

Religious communities are comprised of those who share a common identity because they have a common scripture. The study of scripture is the study of the

particularities of faith that engender commitment and identity. The Bible, as the scripture of Christians and Jews, decisively shapes, preserves and transforms identities (both individual and corporate) when it is used in the common life of those communities. By giving attention to questions of meaning and purpose, the Bible gives perspective and unity of life plan to the multiple activities in which both individuals and the group engage. The virtue of the Bible as a context for identity construction is the wealth of symbolic forms and images which it provides.

Just as religious knowledge grows out of secular knowledge, so universal truths grow out of particular truths. No one can comprehend the universals without understanding the particulars. The deep truths of any scripture and religious tradition are revealed only to the believer. Thus while it may be possible for a person to mature to the point where one can transcend the particularities of one's own faith in order to recognize the truth in all faiths, no one begins at that point. Thus one must choose a limiting structure through which one seeks meaning and purpose. To fail to commit oneself to a community which is identified by a particular set of scriptures, is to be left to one's personal resources in crafting a limiting principle or, alternatively, to wander through life with no clear definition of purpose.

It is my contention that the study of scripture

serves as the identity forming and anchoring point for individuals engaged in each of the other four disciplines that make up religious education. The Bible serves this function for Christians because it fully integrates all modes of knowing. Within the Bible we find a concern for the past, present and future. We find guidance for our relationship to others, self and God. We find images, symbols and a world view. We find an attempt to rationally make sense of the physical, human and metaphysical worlds. The Bible integrates both the affective and cognitive spheres of the mind. It also relates the individual and communal aspects of our life as a people. The Bible gives us an identity which we can both affirm and transcend.

An incarnational spirituality thus leads us to seek for the truth within particularity. Besides the three ways of integration already mentioned, there is the additional task of integrating the particularities of scripture to the universal modes of knowing.

#### A LOOK AHEAD

In the following sections an attempt is made to more thoroughly define the subject matter for a religious education program consciously based on incarnational spirituality. Because one of modes of knowing we must integrate is scripture, the following discussion will be openly Christian. The same four subjects could be taught by integrating them with the Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic or Hindu

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scriptures. Limiting the discussion to Christian religious education should be viewed as suggestive of how generic religious concerns can be particularized and made applicable to a particular religious community.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a full discussion of this research see Bob Samples, The Metaphoric Mind (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Robert E. Ornstein, The Psychology of Consciousness (San Francisco: Freeman, 1973); and Richard M. Jones, "Looking Back and Forth on Consciousness" (Prepared as the keynote address for the Invitational Conference of the Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., June 13, 1975)

<sup>2</sup>Tolbert McCarroll, Guiding God's Children (New York: Paulist Press, 1983) 33.

<sup>3</sup>Samples, 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>6</sup>As quoted by John H. Westerhoff, "What Has Zion To Do With Bohemia?" Religious Education 76 (1981) 13.

<sup>7</sup>McCarroll, 42.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>9</sup>Westerhoff, 11.

<sup>10</sup>John H. Westerhoff, "Learning and Prayer," Religious Education 70 (1975) 607.

<sup>11</sup>McCarroll, 22

<sup>12</sup>Westerhoff, "Learning and Prayer," 606.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 612.

<sup>14</sup>Elliot Eisner (ed.) Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)

<sup>15</sup>Dwayne E. Huebner, "Spirituality and knowing" in Eisner, 170.

<sup>16</sup>Herbert W. Byrne, A Christian Approach to Education (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961)

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>18</sup>John H. Flavell, The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget (New York: Van Nostrand, 1963)

19Ibid., see 130, 134, 147.

20Ibid., 65.

21See the work of Ronald Goldman, especially Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964)

22Flavel, 130.

23Ibid., 147.

24Jim Fowler and Sam Keen, Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978) 48.

25James A. Sanders, "Torah and Christ," Interpretation 29 (1975) 373-405.

26See for example Donald Miller, "Religious Education and Cultural Pluralism," Religious Education 74 (1979) 341.

27Ibid., 334.

28Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

LITURGY: ~~THE~~ INTEGRATION OF MYSTICISM AND ART<sup>1</sup>

It is not a new idea today that worship is a locus for Christian religious education. In past decades there have been a number of calls to and by Christian religious educators to make worship the focus of the church's educational endeavors.<sup>2</sup> Worship produces learning even if it is not systematic education, it is argued. However, such calls rarely critique the kind of learning that goes on in worship from either a qualitative or substantive viewpoint.

Worship should be included in any comprehensive program of Christian religious education. In the interest of such education we need to be clear about why and how we worship. This project suggests that there are two movements in worship: liturgy and heilsgeschichte. It further suggests that liturgy needs to be viewed as the integration of mysticism and art and that Heilsgeschichte needs to be viewed as the integration of theology and history. Let us consider first why it is that liturgy should be claimed as a major focus for Christian religious education.

Definition of Terms

1. Mysticism. Experiences of the holy, the transcendent, the numinous, are common to all people.<sup>3</sup>



Despite one's religious affiliation or lack thereof, people have such experiences. Though not under human control, these experiences can be sought and cultivated. Mysticism is the cultivation of such experiences. It is disciplined attention to relationship with the divine Other.

People in even the most developed countries continue to report a wide variety of mystical experiences. These range from sensory or quasi-sensory experience to extra-sensory perception. Through visions, illuminations, special light, feelings of unity, out of body experiences, voices, music, healing, telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, apparitions, and contact with the dead, persons are transformed by what they perceive to be divine intervention in their lives. In his book, The Spiritual Nature of Man: A Study of Contemporary Religious Experience, Sir Alister Hardy lists three ways in which persons respond to mystical experiences. First, persons gain a sense of purpose or new meaning for their lives. A deep sense of identity and vocation is gained. Experiences of a mystical nature alleviate the emptiness that results when the presence of God is not sensed. Second, mystical experiences change and enhance religious understandings. Third, mystical experiences change a person's attitudes toward others.<sup>4</sup>

Mystical experience is often accompanied by strong emotion, yea passion. Such experiences bring a sudden dramatic reversal of feeling, i.e., from the depths of despair to unbounded joy. Persons report receiving new

strength, encouragement, joy, peace, awe, reverence wonder, exultation, ecstasy, hope and fulfillment. But the most prevalent emotional response is one of love and devotion. As Hardy says, "the experience urges us to go down on our knees before this great mystery."<sup>5</sup>

Spontaneous experiences with the "Other" who is both within and beyond, urges people to establish some regular means of communication. Mysticism has traditionally been viewed as a person's solitary withdrawal into silence, meditation and contemplation in order to commune with the divine. Often such experiences have been difficult to share for lack of words to express relationship with One who is intangible and beyond human comprehension. Mysticism, because it is the cultivation of a personal relationship, can become a highly individualistic pursuit unless it is linked to a form of expression that can be understood communally. As the epistemological model indicates, art can be such a medium of expression.

2. Art. From the beginning, the Christian community has used art to express its faith. Art, as a medium of expression, is not necessarily religious, but it is especially suited to expressing that which is beyond words and rational understanding since it communicates meaning primarily through images. The arts illumine and express the mystical dimensions of life better than most other forms of communication. As Westerhoff has pointed out, the arts

incarnate experiences of mystery, wonder and awe.<sup>6</sup> They put people in touch with the depths life. Art expresses the mystical through images drawn from the physical world, thus emphasizing the sacramentality of the world. In this way, art saves mysticism from the tendency to become ethereal. The sensate world of art speaks to the reality beneath the surface which can not be sensed outwardly.

Artists, like mystics, allow others to exist through them.<sup>7</sup> The artist is the agent through whom meaning is expressed. Therefore, art not only expresses, but nurtures mystical experience. The arts can give communal expression to personal encounters with the holy and sacred. Without the arts individuals are cut off from the best means by which knowledge of a personal relationship with the Holy and Divine can be shared.

Westerhoff contends that human societies are more deeply motivated by images and visions than by ideas; by experiences more than dogmas.<sup>8</sup> Art that is used in Christian religious education needs to be prophetic as well as priestly. It needs to challenge and confront as well as illuminate the mystical. It needs to put people in touch with the Holy so that individual and corporate life might be transformed.

3. Liturgy. It has traditionally been held that liturgy is "the work of the people" or "common work".<sup>9</sup> The word comes from the two Greek words laos, meaning people,

and ergon, meaning work. The word liturgy was not originally a religious term but rather denoted a public work done at private cost.<sup>10</sup> Public works in ancient Greece were regularly undertaken by private citizens. The most wealthy would engage in lavish "liturgies", which included the production of dramas and other art works for the citizens of their city.

Liturgy, the integration of mysticism and art, can be viewed as the work of the people if work is interpreted in terms of "offering" rather than "vocation". Liturgy is the offering, made at personal expense, for the edification of the community. When the full religious significance is added to the word, liturgy also represents a people's offerings to God. This is why thanksgiving and praise are such an integral part of liturgy. That which is most fitting to offer God is the true and the beautiful. Thus, art is integral to liturgy.

This definition of liturgy is distinct from ideas of liturgy as either what is done in church or the text of what is done. Liturgy should be a part of worship but it goes beyond the confines of a church service. Liturgy includes all artistic expressions of the mystical dimension of life. Liturgy witnesses to relationship with God and love of God. The beloved is intangible, but human response needs to be very tangible. Down through the centuries humanity has expressed its response to the divine relationship through dance and drama, through music and song, through story and

poetry, through sculpture, painting, and various other visual arts. Liturgy should invite a community to respond to God through all these various art forms.

The arts are a preeminent way of bringing people together spiritually. By being of one voice through hymnody, for example, a community becomes of one heart and mind. Music, like dance, drama, and visual arts, call individuals out of themselves and into a common experience of communion with the divine. Liturgy, then, becomes an offering to God of the heart, mind and body of the united community.

Liturgy is celebrative. Wayne C. Olsen reminds us that people commune most with their spirits when they are passing through peak times - high moments, when important steps are being taken indicating a change in direction or circumstance.<sup>11</sup> Thus ceremony is important in liturgy. Involving the worshipping community in the creation of ritual is also important.

Liturgy is a devotional discipline. It is important to Christian life, not because it is able to convince people of some article of faith, but because it moves persons to deeper relationship with the Divine. Liturgy enables persons to express and experience God's presence through images and symbols that mediate that presence. Liturgy invites the congregation to participate, not because they rationally comprehend all that is going on, but because they have been divinely touched both from without and from within

the worship experience itself.<sup>12</sup>

According to Westerhoff, The goal of liturgy is not enlightenment but unification.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, liturgy should involve the whole community. It should invite the community to respond and participate fully. As Iris Culley has said,

[Liturgy] is the action of the whole congregation; therefore each person must be taught how to take his part. Only when he understands what he is doing can he fully participate in the acton. Otherwise, he is indifferent, confused or going through words and motions meaninglessly.<sup>14</sup>

Christian religious education needs to concern itself with enabling each and every member of a congregation to participate in liturgy. It also needs to find ways in which personal offerings that blend mysticism and art can be presented in worship so as to edify the church, and glorify God.

Liturgy must be stressed as the work (offering) of the people. Church services must be so arranged that opportunity is given for people to share their offerings as individuals, groups and as a united body. Liturgy is as much an individual creation as the product of ecclesiastical liturgical councils.

### History and Present Practices

For centuries, worship has been the primary means by which the church has educated its members. In times when whole populations were uneducated, this was sufficient. But

in an educated society, worship services are not a sufficient context for the work of Christian religious education. Most adults, for example, attend church only one hour a week - the worship hour. The added hour that children and some adults spend in Sunday School does little to relieve the church's responsibility for a religiously literate membership. Despite the course offerings in Sunday Schools, most religious education continues to be confined to the worship service. Church history, ethics, Bible study, mission, stewardship and all the other concerns of the church have only had one place for a hearing - in worship. No wonder there is little room for liturgy!

In order for there to be effective liturgy within worship there must be other avenues for the church to prepare and educate its congregations. There must be several other hours where the preparations that go into liturgy are stressed long with study of the Bible, stewardship, community, and Heilsgeschichte. By stressing preparation and disciplined study as prerequisites for worship, the worship service itself can be relieved of a tremendous burden and be freed up to serve as the arena for liturgy.

A good deal of attention has recently been given to the use of art in liturgy. Yet in his article, "A Program for Affective Liturgy", Ken Meltz argues that liturgical renewal has fallen short because it has lost sight of the affective dimension of liturgy.<sup>15</sup> Protestant liturgy has

avored the rational, intellectual side of the human person to the neglect of the aesthetic and mystical.

Liturgy often becomes a solid barrage of words aimed at informing the intellect. Preaching is didactic with little artistic appeal and consequently little or no affective impact on the congregation. Even symbols are described and explained rather than experienced. The congregation remains largely inert, passive and inconsequential fostering a spectator mentality. Little attention is given to the senses or the physical body. As Meltz says, "One gets the impression that the liturgy is still primarily designed for the two human ears and especially for the grey matter lying in between."<sup>16</sup> There is little genuine emotion or sentiment expressed in liturgy as it is now formulated in most churches. Prayers are verbal and individualized. Liturgy is often heady, cold, and sterile, far removed from either the mystical or the artistic realms.

The result is that liturgy very rarely opens the congregation to mystical experience and in fact probably serves to make mysticism more difficult in private life. Hardy notes that institutional religion has reportedly played little part in most modern people's accounts of mystical experiences.<sup>17</sup>

### A Call for Change

In calling for change, Meltz targets three areas



that are most in need of reformation. First, he calls for preaching to become more poetic and less prosaic; aimed at stirring the heart as well as convincing the head; an object of attractive art as well as scholarly research. "It's choice of words, its rhythm, its emphases must strive to go beyond the sharing of information to the deeper level of touching the human spirit," he writes.<sup>18</sup> Meltz suggests that preachers need to filter the Gospel message through his/her own personal experiences.<sup>19</sup> Whereas objectivity and a degree of distance were the recommended values in the past, liturgy should today encourage and even require that preachers reveal their own experiences.

Secondly, liturgy should be less thematized. Stressing a theme, Meltz argues, creates a liturgy more concerned with content than with the actual experiences and needs of the gathered community. Liturgy should allow for God's spirit to work within and among members of the congregation. Rigid structures and patterns that demand or program certain types of responses or experiences limit the potential for true liturgy.

Third, symbols need to be made adequate to their meaning. As long as churches continue to describe the significance of symbols rather than improve them, their meaning will not be experienced directly argues Meltz.

While these three recommendations move towards developing worship services where there is greater balance in affectivity and intelligibility, they offer a limited

understanding of liturgy. Indeed, Meltz does not seem to distinguish at all between worship and liturgy or consider liturgy to be anything other than that which makes up a church service. Without a distinction of the two integrated movements within worship, there is a tendency toward riding a pendulum between worship which is highly intelligible and highly affective. Both liturgy, which is highly affective and Heilsgeschichte, which is highly intelligible, are needed in worship. Liturgy brings the mystical, artistic and affective dimensions to worship and is there integrated with with the dimensions of Heilsgeschichte.

### Limitations

There are limitations to the kind of learning that can take place through liturgy. There are also dangers in art and mysticism to be avoided. In his book, Journey to Inner Space, Rodney R. Romney cautions that to avoid dangers within mysticism one must determine why one is cultivating the experience in the first place.<sup>20</sup> Persons who experiment with the psychic merely out of curiosity may find themselves unable to cope with the images and forces that come to them from the subterranean realms. Unless persons are grounded and protected by a strong faith in a loving God, entering into altered states of consciousness can be dangerous. Psychological distress and neurotic disorders have resulted from an inability to avoid the temptations and handle

experiences arising from within the psychic realm.

Romney also warns against the temptation to control the minds of others and claim power for one's own purposes. Persons with special mystical gifts or those that develop them, are easily deified. Christian religious educators need to recognize that it is God who releases mystical powers and abilities. God is the Object and source of mystical experience and all honor should be directed towards God.

Finally, Romney cautions that people can be lured into mysticism for the experience alone and therefore be tempted not to return to the outer world. There is always the temptation in the aftermath of a "spiritual high" to want to remain on the mountain top and prolong the experience. Romney warns that if one does not come back from prayer, meditation, and contemplation to the daily routine of life with deeper insights, greater perception, and a refined affection and tenderness for others, then mysticism is not serving the person well. The goal of mysticism is not to experiment with altered states of consciousness, but to better understand the purpose and meaning of life. Mystical experiences thus need to be shared so that the community might be edified.

The dangers associated with using the arts in liturgy is that they can be pursued for their own sake rather than being used as a tool to express meaning. The liturgical artist needs to always guard against

exhibitionism. Talent, though individually perfected and refined, is still a gift to be properly used. Art becomes liturgical when it is thoughtfully and carefully blended with true religious experience.

Liturgy, itself, has its limitations because it is so highly affective. As noted earlier, the relational mode of knowing needs to be balanced by the other modes of knowing. Liturgy is one way of pursuing the question of life's meaning but it is not sufficient in itself.

#### Summary: the Educational Task

Incarnational spirituality seeks to merge religious and secular concerns as well as integrate the various modes of knowing. In liturgy the traditional religious discipline of mysticism is consciously integrated with the secular discipline of art, thereby merging the relational and conceptual modes of knowing.

Liturgy, according to the epistemological model is highly affective. Christian religious education should prepare people to fully and actively participate in liturgy by cultivating personal mystical experience, and developing artistic talent and sensitivities. Educational methodologies must focus on each individual's full participation.

Liturgy needs also to integrate art and mysticism with the Biblical way of knowing. In liturgy the Bible serves as a rich treasure of mystical and artistic

expression. It provides many images of God which are useful in the devotional life. It contains much spiritual insight which lends itself to artistic expression. The truths of the Bible can be shared various ways in liturgy as classic expressions of life's meaning.

Liturgy, as the work of the people, will reflect what we bring to it. Those communities that have cultivated the mystical life, nurtured artistic expression, and grounded themselves in scripture will find liturgy to be very educationally effective.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Art is found in all cultures. Mysticism is found in all religions. The suggestion that religious education should consciously integrate art and mysticism is relevant to all peoples of every faith. This chapter examines what liturgy, as the integration of mysticism and art, would look like as a focus for Christian religious education. Other faith traditions can appropriate this model by substituting their own scriptures and traditions in the place of that which is distinctively Christian.

<sup>2</sup>See Jeff Astley, "The Role of Worship in Christian Learning," Religious Education 79 (1984) 243-251.

<sup>3</sup>See Alister Hardy, The Spiritual Nature of Man: A Study of Contemporary Religious Experience (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>6</sup>John H. Westerhoff, "What Has Zion To Do With Bohemia," Religious Education 76 (1981) 5-15.

<sup>7</sup>Ken Meltz, "A Program for Affective Liturgy," in Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith (eds.) Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education (New York: Paulist Press, 1979)

<sup>8</sup>Westerhoff, 8-9.

<sup>9</sup>Iris V. Cully, Christian Worship and Church Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967) 11.

<sup>10</sup>Charles P. Price and Louis Weil, Liturgy for Living (New York: Seabury Press, 1979) 21.

<sup>11</sup>Wayne C. Olson, "Ceremony As Religious Education," in Religious Education 74 (1979) 563-569.

<sup>12</sup>Meltz, 91.

<sup>13</sup>John H. Westerhoff, "Contemporary Spirituality: Revelation, Myth, and Ritual," Durka and Smith, (New York: Paulist Press, 1989) 16.

<sup>14</sup>Cully, 30.

<sup>15</sup>Meltz, 86.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>17</sup>Hardy, 132.

<sup>18</sup>Meltz, 92.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>20</sup>Rodney R. Romney, Journey to Inner Space (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980) 15-18.

## CHAPTER 4

HEILSGESCHICHTE: THE INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

The second pillar upon which Christian religious education should be founded and the second movement within worship is Heilsgeschichte. Christian worship has historically been the primary arena in which the mighty acts of God were recounted. Though Judaism and Christianity both evolved primarily as religions in which history was viewed as the arena for God's self-revelation, Christianity today can not be said to have carried on such an appreciation of history. Christians have studied the Bible fervently to discover how God revealed himself in biblical times, but they have all but denied that God continues to be revealed in history. This is a serious problem for the church and one that Christian religious education needs to address.

Definition of Terms

1. Theology. Webster's dictionary provides us with a good place to begin a definition of theology. The dictionary defines theology as the "rational interpretation of religious faith, practice, and experience."<sup>2</sup> Theological thinking is rational. It has at times been referred to as the "queen of the sciences" and, certainly, it is a science in the sense that it's method is scientific, i.e., rational,



deductive, logical. R. A. F. MacKenzie writes that:

theology has claimed and claims that its method is the properly scientific one of observation, collection, and classification of data, the hypothetic enunciation of laws which may explain those data, the experimental verification of such laws where possible, and the establishment with more or less certitude of factual conclusions. Granted, the data are of a very different kind from what the physical scientist is accustomed to working with... this science derives its material from a source that is called "revelation".<sup>3</sup>

Theology is the science that deals with metaphysical realities as the epistemological model has indicated.

Theology, like all science, makes some fundamental assumptions. Theology assumes that there is a metaphysical realm beyond the physical realm. Theology also assumes that humanity is in some way in touch with the metaphysical realm enough to reason about it. Theology builds on these assumptions and is not itself concerned to question them.

That theology does not validate the assumptions upon which it works does not dismiss it from the realm of science. All science, and all knowledge for that matter, is based on assumptions. Just as the physical scientist must take for granted the validity of sense perception, so the subject matter of theology is, quite literally, something taken on faith.

Theology may thus be defined as faith seeking understanding. Theology rests ultimately on a basis of personal commitment. McKenzie sums up its raison d'etre as "an act of faith made by the theologian in the validity of the datum which he proceeds to discuss and analyze."<sup>4</sup>

Theology may turn to at least three sources for data. It may turn to the physical world for data concerning the metaphysical realm. Will Herberg notes that natural theology frequently leads to a religion of "heathenism".<sup>5</sup> Secondly, theology may turn to mysticism as providing the primary data for investigations into the metaphysical realm. Herberg notes that this kind of theology promotes a religion where the focus is directed towards the timelessly eternal behind nature. A third area to which theology may be directed in its search for knowledge of the metaphysical is history. In the Bible it is history that provides the arena for God's activity and self-revelation.

2. History. As used in this discussion, history is the knowledge of and recording of past events. Life's meaning is derived historically by engaging the chronological mode of knowing. As Stephen Schmidt reminds us, history is one approach to the question of meaning though surely not the only approach. Schmidt states that "the historian seeks meaning by reliving the past in a critical intellectual process of reconstruction."<sup>6</sup> Meaning, then, is historically achieved by making connections between the past and the present. We could not understand the past if we could not make such connections. We can interpret the past because there is consistency and a simple common sense understanding of ourselves and the world that transcends history.

In his article, Schmidt lists at least nine ways in which the study of history can divulge meaning. First, he notes that history preserves and passes on that which has been proven to be worthwhile and profitable. History accumulates wisdom. The historically informed are less likely to repeat mistakes and more likely to make progress using as a basis that which previous generations have discovered.

Second, history serves culture as psychology serves individuals, i.e., by providing insight into present situations.<sup>7</sup> Ahistorical persons become trapped in the present. History can be individually and culturally healing through the reconstruction of past reality. Schmidt postulates that the clearer one can be about past events, the clearer will be one's perception of the present and the more promising the future. The better one's understanding of the past, the better one's chance will be for freedom and possibility in the present.<sup>8</sup>

Third, the study of history generates hope. History reminds us that time projects forwards as well as backwards. Though the future is in the making it is not predetermined. Without a critical appreciative personal consciousness of the past there is no vision of the future. The way forward requires a studied look backward. Fourth, history distinguishes the transient from the permanent, fads from basics. History can critique the present and thereby aid in fashioning the future.

Fifth, the study of history saves people from arrogant pride. Without the perspective that history provides, persons become dogmatic, adamant in viewing their way as the only way or best way. History abates the notion of self-assured progress and calls each succeeding generation to thoughtful modesty.<sup>9</sup>

Sixth, the study of history aids in clarifying how to attack current problems. It refines ones judgement and perspective about what important issues of the day need to be addressed and how.

Seventh, the study of history opens up international dialogue. In today's world of mass media one needs to have an appreciation of other people's history as well as one's own. As communities expand and become more pluralistic, history will be even more needed to promote tolerance and greater cooperation among those of different backgrounds.

Eighth, history gives dimension to the present. It adds richness by linking people together with the ongoing human saga. It ties together individual experiences and the larger drama of culture and civilization. It frees people from their own particular disposition towards individualism by incorporating them into the larger stream of human events.<sup>10</sup> History serves as a reminder that ours is not the first generation of civilization. Today's ideas are not necessarily the wisest, nor present social realities the most advanced.

Ninth, history helps people be less gnostic in their

self-understanding and in their relationships to each other and the world. History keeps people grounded in reality, in earthly pursuits of active political life. History serves as a reminder that all life is contextual. History calls for social activity, for political discernment, for public involvement.<sup>11</sup>

Every one has many partial histories, reflecting the many concerns and interests of life. Persons have a national history, a family history, an ethnic history, and a personal history, just to name a few. Herberg writes,

Each of these concerns, allegiances, and associations has its own special history through which it is expressed and made explicit. But most of these histories, we ourselves realize, are merely partial histories; they define only fragments of our being and do not tell us who we "really" are. Underlying and including the partial histories of life, there must be some "total" history, in some way fundamental and comprehensive, some really ultimate history.<sup>12</sup>

Herberg defines one's ultimate history as redemptive history or Heilsgeschichte. It is the history that gives life its meaning and the self its identity. "This is the history that defines, and is defined by one's faith," says Herberg. "It is, indeed, the history that is one's faith."<sup>13</sup>

All human history is Heilsgeschichte since its purpose is to tell us who we are, where we stand, and give meaning to existence. Whatever history people take to tell them who they are may thus be taken to define their actual faith. Without this kind of universal history, persons fall prey to the partial histories that divide and fragment the self. Idolotry can thus be defined as relating to a partial

history as if it were ultimate.

3. Heilsgeschichte. In this discussion the term "Heilsgeschichte" refers to that aspect of religious education which integrates theology and history. Heilsgeschichte is a concept very familiar to biblical scholarship but not much used outside that discipline. Heilsgeschichte might also be termed sacred history, salvation history, historical theology or even biblical theology, since much of the theology found in the Bible focuses on God as revealed in history. Herberg writes,

Biblical faith understands human existence and human destiny in irreducibly historical terms. If the question is asked what is the real reality of man, what is the actualization of which constitutes the fullness of his being, ...the biblical thinker would say his history. History is the very stuff out of which human being is made: human existence is potential or implicit history; history is explicit or actualized existence-....On the basis of this understanding, biblical faith insists that man can realize himself only in and through his life in history.<sup>14</sup>

Through the work biblical scholars, it has been recognized that Israel's history as recorded in the Bible is God-centered and theologically interpreted. It is history interpreted by faith. The recounting of this history was the central religious act in Israel. History served as the chief medium of revelation and thus attention was given to historical detail. Israel's doctrine of God was not derived from systematic or speculative thought, but rather from the attempt to explain the events which led to the establishment of a nation.

Israel's history was not above theological reinterpretation. Perceptions of her history constantly changed. As Gerhard von Rad writes,

Israel had to let herself be addressed directly by the events of her history, in their constantly changing shape. That was the reason for her alternating efforts to represent anew great stretches of her history. The Old Testament is to a great extent nothing but the literary record of a people's passionate millennium long conversation about the meaning of its history.<sup>15</sup>

For Israel, Heilsgeschichte was a kind of eyewitness account, a testimony to deeds done and victories accomplished by a divinity who had acted in the full sight of humanity. It was a recital or proclamation of the acts of God, together with the inferences drawn therefrom. Heilsgeschichte can thus be referred to as a theology of recital in which persons confess their faith by reciting the formative events of their history. G. Ernest Wright notes that Heilsgeschichte "is primarily a confessional recital in which history is seen as a problem of faith, and faith a problem of history."<sup>16</sup>

Heilsgeschichte, in dealing with the facts of history theologically, continually pushes beyond what is factually known. It does so with the assumption that history not only reveals the metaphysical, but that metaphysics is necessary for a proper understanding of history.

Heilsgeschichte is not merely an historical recollection, however. It is not simply a recital of events that occurred in the past. Rather, Heilsgeschichte demands

participation and decision in the present. Heilsgeschichte becomes the voice of God. Herberg writes,

It is as though we sat witness to some tremendous epic drama being performed on a vast stage, when suddenly the chief character of the drama, who is also its director, steps forward to the front of the stage, fixes his eyes upon us, points his finger at us, and calls out: "You are wanted. Come up here. Take your part." This is the call of faith coming from out of "sacred history", the call to cease to be a spectator and come forward to be an actor in the great drama of redemption.<sup>17</sup>

Herberg notes that unless people perceive this call and respond to it, history ceases to be meaningful and redemptive. Heilsgeschichte is a history in which one is both object and subject. "Paradoxically," writes Herberg, "it is a history in which one is an object unless he is subject, one is not spectator unless he is actor, for unless one is really actor and subject, the 'sacred history' ceases to be personal history and loses all religious significance."<sup>18</sup>

Heilsgeschichte does not allow one to take leave of the past. The past is again and again introduced into the present. When people deal with history theologically, they are dealing with their own relationship to God.

### History and Present Practices

Despite the fact that the primary act of worship in most Christian churches is centered on a retelling of the biblical stories, the church seems to have lost the ability to think "Heilsgeschichtically". Christian religious educa-



tion pays little attention to sacred history except as it is recorded in the Bible. There seem to be two primary reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs. First, there is within American culture a general devaluing of history. Secondly, history is no longer seen as the locus for divine action and revelation. In the United States, the devaluing of history is not merely a religious phenomenon but a cultural attitude as well. Today few Americans are conscious of a meaningful past and most consider the past they do recall as irrelevant. Schmidt notes that advocates of historical perspective are lacking in an ahistorical age where nowness is celebrated and tomorrow avoided.<sup>19</sup>

Though Protestants have been very interested in the times of Jesus, they have paid scant attention to world history as a whole. There seems to be a widespread belief in the church that divine revelation ceased at the close of the first century a.d. Bruce Shelly accuses Christians of suffering from "historical amnesia".<sup>20</sup>

Christian religious education needs to lead the way in re-emphasizing history as a medium through which God is revealed today and through which life's meaning can be found. Religious education needs to stress that God is continually at work in the world. The study of all history from a theological point of view can help in this task. An examination of the low points of history as well as the high points is essential. Discerning the theological implications of history is a fundamental aspect of Christian

religious education.

### Limitations

Heilsgeschichte is an important part of Christian religious education but it has limitations. The study of history from a theological point of view is not guaranteed to refute all error, make humble saints out of students or plot an unfailing course for mission. Even the most informed perspective, the clearest insight, and the soundest theology does not predetermine one's course of action. Confidence in a reinvigorated Christian religious education program can not lie in the study of sacred history alone.

In her study of Heilsgeschichte as an hermeneutical tool for Bible Study within Roman Catholic religious education, Mary Boys found that the use of Heilsgeschichte as an exclusive or overarching principle of interpretation is no longer tenable. For many years salvation history was isolated from and elevated above other hermeneutical guides. "Consequently," she notes, "it bore more theological weight than it could adequately sustain."<sup>21</sup> Boys confirms the supposition that Heilsgeschichte needs always to be placed in its proper relationship to other ways of interpreting the Bible and to religious education.

The benefits of history are also limited by the proper use of the discipline. The misuse of history is as dangerous as the failure to use it. Schmidt warns us

against three misuses of history. First, he notes that history can be presented as an attack against a particular segment of society. In this way history can reinforce bigotry and prejudice. Second, history may be biased. Facts and texts may be randomly assembled to make an argument which was predetermined before the research was begun. This sort of cut and paste proof texting does a great disservice to historical truth. Third, history can be read katachronically, i.e., judging the past by present standards instead of the standards of the time. This, too, prevents the truth and meaning inbedded in the past from coming through.<sup>22</sup>

To avoid these pitfalls history should involve a hermeneutic of suspicion as well as a homiletic of hope according to Schmidt.<sup>23</sup> Suspicion involves critical analysis and careful selection of data. It involves the emphathetic understanding of events. Historians must acknowledge their subjectivity and their biases since all historical study involves selection.

The corrective for faulty history is more history. Historians who base their work on rich data resources will generally produce the truest, and surely the most interesting history.<sup>24</sup> Schmidt writes:

Since history is always an interpretaion of the past, other interpretations are always necessary. As each generation has the task of reviewing those interpretations, the dialectic of historical interpretation is involved in the final ongoing monitoring of the truthfulness of interpretation. So historical meaning grows from generation to generation as each preceding

scholarship reconsiders the interpretation of the past generation. The hope for authoritative interpretation is a communal hope; it is part of the ongoing dialogue of the historical enterprise.<sup>25</sup>

### Summary: The Educational Task

In incarnational spirituality, Heilsgeschichte replaces theology as one of the pillars upon which religious education is founded. This shift is a result of the concern to integrate the secular discipline of history with the religious discipline of theology. Heilsgeschichte is highly cognitive. By integrating rational and chronological thought, it serves the need for intelligible worship. It helps answer the question, "Who am I?"

Heilsgeschichte requires primarily a reflective educational approach. Educational methods will need to include what James W. Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra and Mircea Malitza refer to as "banking".<sup>26</sup> History demands memory work. It accumulates knowledge from and about the past. Theology also flourishes as knowledge is accumulated. Banking, as the approach most suited to Heilsgeschichte stands, in contrast to methodologies suited to the other religious disciplines were participation and an active/reflective pedagogy are more appropriate.

The Bible serves as a testimony that God is revealed in history and calls people today to look for signs of God's presence and action in the world. In worship and in the classroom history needs to be reflected upon theologically.

Students need a thorough understanding of the past and a well founded theology. They also need the grounding that the Bible can provide.

Responsible Heilsgeschichte is hard work but it is essential for meaningful worship and meaningful education. Yet it is not sufficient in itself. In worship, it needs to be integrated with liturgy. In Christian religious education, it also needs to balance and be balanced by a concern for stewardship, and community.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Again, let the reader be reminded that Heilsgeschichte is a discipline applicable to all religious education. All persons are historical beings. All faiths are steeped in metaphysics and most have developed a systematic theology. This chapter will examine what Heilsgeschichte, as the integration of history and theology, would look like as a focus for Christian religious education. Other faith traditions can appropriate this model by substituting their own scriptures and traditions in the place of that which is distinctively Christian.

<sup>2</sup>Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: G & G Merriam, 1970)

<sup>3</sup>K.A.F. McKenzie, Faith and History in the Old Testament (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963) 3-4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>5</sup>Will Herberg, "Biblical Faith As Heilsgeschichte: The Meaning of Redemptive History in Human Existence," Christian Scholar 39 (1956) 25-26.

<sup>6</sup>Stephen Schmidt, "The Uses of History and Religious Education," Religious Education 80 (1985) 359.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 360.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 366.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 365.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 366-367.

<sup>12</sup>Herberg, 28.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>15</sup>Gerhard von Rad, God At Work in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980) 13.

<sup>16</sup>G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts (London: SCM Press, 1952) 11.

<sup>17</sup>Herberg, 31.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Schmidt, 345.

<sup>20</sup>Bruce L. Shelly, Church History in Plain Language (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982) 9.

<sup>21</sup>Mary Boys, Biblical Interpretation in Religious Education (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1980)

<sup>22</sup>Schmidt, 362.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 354.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>26</sup>James W. Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra and Mircea Malitza, No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979)

## CHAPTER 5

STEWARDSHIP: THE INTEGRATION OF DOCTRINE AND SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

Education in stewardship, as it is being defined here, has not received much attention in Christian religious education. Glancing through the contents of the Religious Education journal reveals only one article on this subject published in the last decade. This is not to say that some education in stewardship is not happening in the churches, but obviously Christian religious education is not focused here. The epistemological model indicates that stewardship, as one of the movements of mission, should be a pillar upon which Christian religious education is built. Is the model skewed, or has there been an important area ignored in Christian religious education efforts? Why has stewardship received so little attention?

Stewardship has been ignored by Christian religious educators primarily because, operating according to hierarchical spirituality, the church has placed little importance on the physical world, choosing to focus instead on the metaphysical. Christian thought has focused more on personal than cosmic salvation, viewing the physical world merely as the a backdrop for the unfolding story of human salvation. Stewardship, which integrates scientific knowledge with doctrinal positions, has had little incentive to develop.



All of this is changing, however, in an age when problems stemming from the physical world threaten the very existence of the planet. Today, survival demands that humanity concern itself with the worldwide degradation of the life-supporting environment, the approaching depletion of mineral energy resources, the approaching limits of the land and water's capacity to produce food and fiber for humanity, the problems which technology creates (in its efforts to solve others) and population increases in nations already crowding the limits of their resources.<sup>2</sup> Today the religious community is being forced to recognize that personal salvation is tied up with the earth's restoration.<sup>3</sup> People simply cannot escape from their embeddedness in nature or nature's embeddedness in them. Therefore, the doctrines by which the church guides life must be expanded to include the rest of creation in the plan of salvation.

Many within the scientific community and the religious community are beginning to recognize that the church's inadequate doctrine of nature and scientific progress has led the world to a very precarious point. Ecclesiastical doctrines need to be revised in light of recent scientific discoveries and developments. Scientific knowledge, likewise, needs to be directed by our best understanding of what life is about. Stewardship education, the enormously difficult and important task of determining how human beings should relate to the world and use scientific knowledge, is important for Christians.

Hopefully, this project will lead to a greater appreciation of the relatedness of these two disciplines and help stewardship to become a focal point for Christian religious education in the future.

### Definition of Terms

1. Doctrine. The term doctrine, as it is being used here, refers to the schemas by which persons conceive of the world. Doctrines spell out basic assumptions about life. All cultures perpetuate a worldview around which they are built. Doctrine serves both to help individuals understand the cultural worldview and guide them towards more appropriate personal worldviews.

In the book Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources, the Calvin College consortium refers to doctrines or worldviews as "models". In making the point that everyone operates within a worldview, the consortium writes:

Sometimes these have been conscious and deliberate models... More often, they have not been consciously developed by anyone, but stand, like folklore or mythology, as a sort of backdrop to all thought about the world and human action in it. These various world models have in turn shaped models of the person, and thus have provided different motives for acting toward the earth and its creatures.<sup>4</sup>

To acknowledge the importance of doctrine is to recognize that the way people think affects the way they act. Behavior is strongly affected by conscious or

unconscious doctrine. E.F. Schumacher has written:

The most urgent need of our time is and remains the need for metaphysical reconstruction, a supreme effort to bring clarity into our deepest convictions with regard to the question: what is Man? Where does he come from? What is the purpose of his life?<sup>5</sup>

People do not develop doctrine as isolated individuals. Doctrine is handed on from generation to generation and has a strong effect on the private and internal worldviews constructed by an individual. As C.S. Lewis has written, "...in every age the human mind is deeply influenced by the accepted Model of the universe."<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of doctrine is to sum up or represent a complex worldview. Doctrine perceives structure in the world and thereby determines how one relates to the world. But though doctrines present a picture of reality, they are abstractions and not reality themselves. Doctrine fails to serve its purpose when it becomes resistant to change in the face of reality. One of Wilkinson et al's principles about models (i.e. doctrines) is that they can and perhaps should change.<sup>7</sup> Such change should come about when the accuracy, scope, or simplicity of a doctrine becomes inadequate to handle the culturally accumulated knowledge. One of the ways in which it is discovered that doctrines need changing is through the problems that result when doctrines are applied to action in the world.

As evidence that doctrines do and must change, Wilkinson et al define eight doctrinal views of nature which have at one time or another characterized Western thought

from the Greeks to the present. Their list includes:

1. Man reverences nature, which is divine.
2. Man shuns nature, which is imperfect.
3. Man is conscious of nature, which is like a great organism.
4. Man is a self-conscious but accidental occurrence in nature, which is nothing but matter in motion.
5. Nature is like a great machine, whose laws of operation can be discovered and applied.
6. Nature is to be used entirely for the purposes of humans, who are the part of the world's mechanism which can think.
7. Nature provides an inexhaustible supply of raw material for the needs of human activity.
8. Nature is limited, fragile, intricate,<sup>8</sup> and valuable, comparable to a spaceship or a cell.

A growing number of people are becoming concerned that Christendom has not, up until now, had an adequate doctrine of nature and has thus contributed to the present world predicament. Professor Lynn White has accused Christianity as being the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.<sup>9</sup> Albert Schweitzer recognized that "we like to imagine that man is nature's goal, but the facts do not support that belief."<sup>10</sup>

The Bible is called upon by Christians to formulate doctrine, but the Bible itself is not doctrine. It does not dictate how persons in the 20th century are to regulate land use, energy, and medical science. It does, however, contain certain principles relevant to all times, which humanity can use in formulating doctrine.

2. Science. In this discussion the term science denotes not only the study of the physical world, but also the knowledge gained from such study that allows humankind

to manipulate nature. "Science", then, includes what might be termed technology and even economics. To clarify the definition, "nature" also needs to be defined.

Nature is a broad term refering to the earth and all it perceptually contains, excluding those objects and systems which have been formed by humans. Nature includes non-living matter such as rock, water and air; energy such as gravitational pulls, radiation, wind and wave movement; organic life such as plants, mammals, fish and birds; and human life - though there are aspects of the human that stand outside nature.

The human ability to investigate and experiment with the natural world allows us to gain knowledge with which we can manipulate and change it. It would be difficult today to make a separation between science which is undertaken for the sake of knowledge alone and science that is directed at bringing about some desired change. Science, like history or art, is a tool which humanity can wield either for good or evil. The purposes towards which scientific knowledge is directed, however, may either be monstrous or heroic.

In order for humanity to use science wisely, it needs to be guided and controlled by a proper worldview. Scientific knowledge can unlock the secrets within a particular realm of nature, but it does not provide humankind with an understanding of the purpose of creation. Science provides knowledge of aspects of the creation but little knowledge of how these aspects form a whole.

Scientific knowledge creates opportunities for power. But the exercise of power based solely on knowledge and unaccompanied by a sense of the coherence and unity of all things is often an exercise of destructive power. When the interrelationships and complexities of the whole are neglected or ignored, unforeseen side effects result. The exercise of power needs to be guided by doctrines that exhibit a concern for all life. This is the task of stewardship.

3. Stewardship. The term stewardship refers to the human management of physical resources, knowledge and power in ways that care for and enhance the life of the entire planet. Stewardship (used or misused) is an inescapable condition of human existence.<sup>11</sup> All human beings exercise dominion over parts of the physical world. We use and consume raw material. We depend on and are depended on by other creatures. These abilities enable humanity to exercise stewardship, or what the Bible refers to as "dominion".

It is no accident that the Church has traditionally used the word "stewardship" to refer to monetary matters. The translation of the Greek word oikonomia can be rendered both as "stewardship" or "economics".<sup>12</sup> Economics in its original sense meant the management of one's own household. But another word with the same Greek linguistical roots, ecology, suggests that we broaden stewardship to include not

only monetary wealth and income, but also the great, living wealth of the planet. Stewardship, therefore, is not simply the management of money but of all the world's resources, both natural and human.

Stewardship recognizes that human beings have a special place in creation. According to Christian doctrine, humanity is "in charge" of God's creation. Nature is a God-given gift for humanity to gain sustenance from and enjoy. Humanity is to manage the earth's physical resources but is not to abuse them. Dominion is to be exercised as service to the whole created world. As managers of the planet human beings need a growing awareness of their interdependence on and obligations to the earth. Dean C. Freudenber has cautioned that "wherever we penetrate into the world of nature we must cooperate with its own life, thus assuring, insofar as we are able, its continuance in its created place."<sup>13</sup>

Albert Schweitzer recognized that stewardship requires decisions that at times destroy one life form in order to preserve another. Yet he warned that "man needs to make distinctions only as each case comes before him and under the pressure of necessity."<sup>14</sup> Schweitzer felt that whenever human beings injure any kind of life, they must be quite certain it is necessary because they bear the responsibility for that life which is sacrificed. One must never go beyond the unavoidable, not even in apparently insignificant things. Schweitzer wrote:

The farmer who has mowed down a thousand flowers in his meadow in order to feed his cows must be careful on his way home not to strike the head of a single flower by the side of the road in idle amusement, for he thereby infringes the law of life without being under the pressure of necessity.<sup>15</sup>

With the explosion of scientific knowledge in recent decades, the task of stewardship has barely begun. The task of discerning how this new knowledge relates to God's purposes for the planet is a huge responsibility. Humanity must learn how to use technology and resources sparingly and appropriately, determining their use by considering the total welfare of the ecosphere.<sup>16</sup>

It is to humanity corporately that God has given stewardship responsibility. All people deserve to share in the responsibilities of stewardship. Dean C. Freudenberger contends that the Bible fosters an understanding of the world that promotes justice, participation and sustainability. He explains these terms in the following words:

Justice means that there is equity and freedom to participate to one's full potential in the process of creativity and that a denial of this freedom to participate responsively in the whole creative process is the most fundamental denial of human rights. Participation means that which we have thus far emphasized: a meaning which goes far beyond ordinary notions (good ones) of the right and responsibilities of individuals and their communities to be involved in the difficult decisions facing each one of us in the technologically sophisticated society that is ours. Sustainability means that whatever we do with our sciences and technology to support ourselves and our communities in justice and dignity can be repeated by everyone, everywhere, into the indefinite future of the many generations yet to be born.<sup>17</sup>

These biblical principles, in his estimation should lead to doctrines that promote responsible stewardship of nature.



Good stewards must seek to reform those social structures which damage the ecosphere and disrupt the natural order.

The Calvin College consortium sees the demands placed on stewards by both the human population and the ecosphere as complementary.<sup>18</sup> The goal of stewardship is to fulfill human needs and those of the ecosphere in a harmonious fashion. Stewards ought to avoid emphasizing nature over human community or vice versa. Rather, solutions should be sought where the needs of both are balanced. "We must," they write, "find ways of action which will fulfill the commands of justice and stewardship without placing different parts of creation in tension with each other."<sup>19</sup>

Humanity is entrusted with a great responsibility. A steward is to care for the physical world. There are limits and there are potentials. Wilkinson et al advocate that knowledge, wisdom and wonder should precede the exercise of power.<sup>20</sup> Such a sequence would alter much of our education they claim, and also alter our lifestyles.

### History and Present Practices

In their book, Wilkinson et al give an excellent overview of the long history of religious and intellectual forces which have shaped humanity's relationship to nature. From the Greeks to the present day, with a few exceptions, attitudes toward nature have been destructive and

problematical. Although people have treated the earth differently in different periods, humankind has generally misused its privilege of dominion. Instead of understanding their unique abilities as a responsibility, human beings have conceived of their dominion as the occasion for increasing their own comfort and power at the expense of everything and everyone else. Today, most people in modern societies treat nature as if humanity is apart from the earth and master over it. Nature continues to be viewed as a means to an end. Humanity has not shown much concern for the physical world's health. Decades ago Albert Schweitzer wrote, "It seems almost something abnormal that over a portion of the earth's surface nature should be nothing and man everything."<sup>21</sup>

Two strongly developed secular doctrines of nature are found in North America today: that of the frontier, which would encourage humanity to go on using resources indiscriminately; and that of the spaceship, which encourages restraint, recycling, and restoration.<sup>22</sup> Within the church, the religious counterparts to these two conflicting worldviews can be found. One side of Christianity has stressed the separation of the church from the world - and even from the earth. Tertullian and Ellul are among those who have held this position. The Calvin College consortium notes:

They have maintained that the wisdom, powers, and techniques of corrupt man can only lead to slavery and destruction, and that any attempt to build a future on

human foundations will produce Babel, Babylon, or Sodom - but not Zion. Today those who hold this view stress the evil of technology, the corruption of the political process, and the need for Christians to live in radical tension with the fallen order - if necessary, letting it destroy them to thus reveal its fallenness.<sup>23</sup>

The other response to the dilemma has been made by those who see the institutions and abilities of humans as gifts of God, redeemable along with humankind. Justin Martyr, Calvin, those in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, and many contemporary Reformed and Sacramental thinkers can be classified as belonging to this camp. The consortium notes that "these have maintained that for Christians to build the city of man, however haltingly, in an awareness of God's working in the world, is to build Zion and that ultimate kingdom or peace."<sup>24</sup>

Albert Schweitzer maintained that "any religion or philosophy which is not based on a respect for life is not a true religion or philosophy."<sup>25</sup> He felt that the Christian religion had not insisted as much as it should on the fact that kindness should include all living creatures. He charged that

our civilization lacks human feeling. We are humans who are insufficiently humane! We must realize that and seek to find a new spirit. We have lost sight of this ideal because we are solely occupied with thoughts of men instead of remembering that our goodness and compassion should be extended to all creatures.<sup>26</sup>

Rene Dubos believes that human relationships to the earth can be lastingly successful only if fundamental ecological laws are respected. Modern human beings have become destructive because they have lost their quality of

relationships to the earth, he maintains.<sup>27</sup> He notes that science and technology provide humanity with the means to create almost anything it wants, but the development of means without worthwhile goals generates at best a dreary life and at worst may lead to tragedy. He advocates relationships based on reverence, respect and love, not domination.

Contemplating the consequences of humanity's misuse of the natural world has brought many people to despair. This need not be, and should not be the Christians response, according to Wilkinson et al. Christian doctrine affirms that creation is good. It also affirms that despite human sinfulness, i.e., its abuse of privilege and dominion, the world is being redeemed through Jesus Christ. When Christians affirm that God loves the world and that Christ died for the life of the world, they are speaking not just of humanity, but of the whole planet - indeed, the whole created universe. Christian doctrine calls for trust in the One who can change world views and value structures.

#### A Call for Change

As long as humanity continues to exist, it will intervene in nature. But from now on this must be done with a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the earth as well as humankind. Individuals and societies must therefore attempt to anticipate the long range consequences of their actions.

Christians need to speak and act prophetically. As the instruments of Christ's redeeming work on earth, they are called to take up the task of responsible stewardship. They are not to shun their powers of intellect, creativity and technique. Rather they are to use them for the wise and loving management of creation, sharing in "lordship" with Christ. Life in God's world can be a joyous thing for there is joy in challenge and happiness in responsible stewardship.<sup>28</sup>

Humankind does not have to destroy the world through its knowledge and technological advances. A proper understanding of Christian stewardship will foster doctrines of the interrelatedness of all life and caution against treating anything as mere raw material. Such a perspective can be derived not only from the sources of Christian faith but from science itself. Now, with the special ability to view the earth from space, concern for the whole planet and its ecospheres should be heightened.

Appropriate technology will mean using all the devices and skills of science in order to enhance all life on earth and also restraining the use of those powers that destroy life. Human use and manipulation of nature needs to be tempered by a recognition that the planet supports other creatures and ecosystems.

Like Schwitzer, the church needs to stress "reverence for life" and advocate a "boundless ethic" which includes respect for all nature and is not limited to human

relationships. The deeper one looks into nature, the more one will realize that it is full of life, and the more profounding one will know that all life is a secret and that humanity is united with all life that is in nature. Human beings can no longer live for themselves alone. They must realize that all life is valuable and that all life is united. From this knowledge comes humanity's spiritual relationship to the universe.

### Limitations

There are limitations to the kind of learning that can take place through focusing on stewardship. There are also dangers to be avoided. Whereas God is revealed in nature, God is not synonymous with nature. There is more to reality than the physical world. Will Herberg cautions, of "heathenism":

Heathenism...is obviously not something confined to primitive peoples remote in time and place. On the contrary, the Heathen way of understanding man in his relation to ultimate reality seems to enter into the spirituality of men at all times and places, including our own. It emerges in the nature-panteism of so many spiritually minded people of our time, as well as in the "hardboiled" scientific naturalism that holds nature to be ultimate and sees man as nothing more than a biological organism adjusting to its environment.<sup>30</sup>

Christians need to be concerned with stewardship, not because the world itself is divine, but because it is a gift from the Creator God. They need to beware of confusing the gift with the Giver. They need also to remember that

God who is recognized in nature as the Creator, has other aspects. God is also the Redeemer. Concern for the physical world needs to allow for God's grace. Doctrines of nature, while they must be well thought through, should not become resistant to change.

In Christian religious education, stewardship needs to be integrated with other concerns. The focus must not be so rivited on scientific knowledge and doctrinal knowledge that they become our only means of making sense of life. To be a steward is a high calling but not the Christian's only calling. While it is important that stewardship education be included in Christian religious education programs, it is but one pillar upon which the entire program should be built. By itself, it is not sufficient for developing mature faith.

#### Summary: The Educational Task

In a religious education program that consciously appropriates incarnational spirituality, stewardship replaces doctrinal studies as one of the pillars upon which curricula needs to be built. This shift is a result of the concern to integrate the secular scientific disciplines with religious doctrine. In so doing, stewardship also integrates the conceptual and the rational modes of knowing.

Stewardship is highly cognitive. In stewardship education, Christian religious educators should encourage

both reflection and action according to the best scientific knowledge and the most responsible doctrine. It should be guided by biblical convictions about God's purpose for the world. Studying the full, complex interrelationships of the physical world in the light of Scripture should be as important a part of the education of every Christian as is the study of church doctrine.

The way in which the Bible is used is important in stewardship education, as in the other areas of religious education. The Bible is not to be used as a science textbook. Rather, its value lies in its confession that the physical world is the creation of a good God and life itself a gift. In stewardship, those passages of the Bible that encourage reverence for the creation and a wholistic view of reality should be stressed.

The methodology best suited to stewardship education is that of action/reflection. Stewardship is a part of the mission of the church. To the moral question, "What am I to do?" stewardship responds, "A Christian is to care for the creation that now exists and further God's creative purposes." In order to teach and learn in this area Christian religious educators need to encourage study and action. Study should prompt action and action should provide new data upon which to reflect. In this manner the Church walks hand in hand with the larger society towards greater appreciation of and care for the physical world.



stewardship education should not only provide science with ethical guidelines, but it should keep our doctrine from becoming too ethereal. Stewardship prompts people to rethink doctrines of creation and redemption in light of the physical world. As Wilkinson et al conclude, "Unless our understanding of redemption extends to our stewardship of the earth, it is incomplete; and without redeemed persons, humanity will only destroy the rich and beautiful planet it inhabits."<sup>31</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Humanity is a part of the physical world. Doctrine is a part of all religions. The suggestion that religious education should consciously integrate science (the study of the physical world) and doctrine, is relevant to all peoples of every faith. This chapter will examine what stewardship, as the integration of science and doctrine, would look like as a focus for Christian religious education. Other faith traditions can appropriate this model by substituting their own scriptures and traditions in the place of that which is distinctively Christian.

<sup>2</sup>Loren Wilkinson (ed.) Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 101.

<sup>3</sup>C. Dean Freudenberger deals with this concern extensively in his work. See for example, The Gift of Land (Los Angeles: Franciscan Communications, 1981)

<sup>4</sup>Wilkinson, 186.

<sup>5</sup>E.F. Schumacher, Good Work (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 123.

<sup>6</sup>C.S. Lewis, The Disgarded Image (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964) 222.

<sup>7</sup>Wilkinson, 187.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>9</sup>Lynn White, Jr., "Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," Science 155 (March 10, 1967) 1203-1207.

<sup>10</sup>Ann Cottrell Free, Animals, Nature and Albert Schweitzer (The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, The Albert Schweitzer Center, The Animal Welfare Institute and the Humane Society of the U.S., 1982) 30.

<sup>11</sup>Wilkinson, 224.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>13</sup>Freudenberger, 15.

<sup>14</sup>Free, 29.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>16</sup>Wilkinson, 256.

<sup>17</sup>Freudenberger, 5.

<sup>18</sup>Wilkinson, 262.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Free, 19.

<sup>22</sup>Wilkinson, 195.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Free, 58.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Rene Dubos, The Wooing of the Earth (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1980) as quoted by Fredenberger, 47.

<sup>28</sup>Wilkinson, 292.

<sup>29</sup>Free, 24.

<sup>30</sup>Will Herberg, "Biblical Faith As Heilsgeschichte: The Meaning of Redemptive History in Human Existence," Christian Scholar 39 (1956) 25-26.

<sup>31</sup>Wilkinson, 97.

## CHAPTER 6

COMMUNITY: THE INTEGRATION OF ESCHATOLOGY AND POLITICS<sup>1</sup>

The epistemological model that has been developed posits that religious education needs to concern itself with issues of community as a second aspect of missiological education. Community has for some time been recognized as both a goal and a means of Christian religious education. Perhaps John Westerhoff is the most persistent voice in reminding us of the powerful way communities influence one's thoughts and actions.<sup>2</sup>

A focus on community in a program of Christian religious education seems to be clearly justified on the grounds that many people today suffer from what Sara Little terms "homelessness of mind".<sup>3</sup> Christian religious education needs to become more intentional about building community because of the increasing sense of alienation that goes along with today's technological era. Community is no longer a given. More and more it needs to be nurtured, and intentionally sought. Let us examine how this may be done through the integration of eschatology and politics.

Definition of Terms.

1. Eschatology. Ever since persons began to reflect

upon the meaning of existence, they have fashioned dreams and visions of what life could be like. Human beings continually imagine an ever better world. They have speculated on its possible nature and shared with others their longings for a better life in the hope that a future ideal might, at least in part, become a reality. Eschatology is the disciplined envisioning of the future based on these ultimate hopes and dreams.

Several writers including Gustavo Gutierrez and Howard Thurman speak of eschatology as the fashioning of utopias. They argue that, as such, it is common to all people in every age.<sup>4</sup> Utopias are rooted in the very structure of human life, argues Thurman. He maintains that "there is a spirit that hovers over all the generations of man that rejects the contradictions of his private life as being either ultimate or final."<sup>5</sup> Both Gutierrez and Thurman take note of the many utopias that have arisen at various times which run the gamut of human hopes, aspirations and dreams.

Utopias point the way to fresh possibility for humankind in the struggle to actualize both individual and social potential. They are created in response to concrete problems within a particular social setting. They challenge the notion that the contradictions and tragedies of life are final. Even when persons are sure that what they desire can not be realized in their own lifetime, they dare to keep dreaming that someday it will come to pass. As long as

there is a conviction that a potential has not yet been realized or that a new future is possible, utopias will continue to flower.

Gutierrez maintains that utopias emerge with renewed energy in times of transition and crisis.<sup>6</sup> According to him, they serve to denounce the present order and announce a new one. Utopias thus function on the level of the cultural revolution which attempts to forge a new kind of humanity. In clarifying his views Gutierrez makes a helpful distinction between ideology and eschatology. He writes:

Ideology does not rise above the empirical, irrational level. Therefore, it spontaneously fulfills a function of preservation of the established order. Therefore, also, ideology tends to dogmatize all that has not succeeded in separating itself from it or has fallen under its influence. Political action, science, and faith do not escape this danger. Utopia, however, leads to an authentic and scientific knowledge of reality and to a praxis which transforms what exists.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that Christianity has given and still gives rise to various utopian dreams. Jesus' thoughts regarding the future are contained in his message concerning the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is both present and coming. Jesus teaches that we are to both pray and work for the Kingdom to come on earth. Jesus asks his followers to hope for that which they cannot see, to trust God's transforming power, to have faith that God guides the future just as God has guided the past and present. The Christian is to look to the future with confidence, believing that God's ends are going to be achieved. Jesus does not, however, give a detailed report of what the future will be

like. Thus the multiplicity of eschatologies, all claiming to be Christian.

Lewis Mumford makes a distinction between utopias that are places of refuge for the spirit and those that undertake to project a place of release at some time in the future.<sup>8</sup> The former he calls utopias of escape, the latter, utopias of reconstruction. In clarifying this distinction he writes,

The first leaves the external world the way it is; the second seeks to change it so that one may have intercourse with it in one's own terms. In one we build impossible castles in the air, in the other we consult a surveyor and an architect and a mason and proceed to build a house which meets our essential needs; as well as houses made of stone and mortar are capable of meeting them.<sup>9</sup>

When it has seemed impossible to transform society, Christians have envisioned the Kingdom of God as being completely beyond the present order where frustrations, sins, brokenness and evil reign. In these times it seems that a supernatural reordering of the world is the only hope. Thus, this type of eschatology focuses on a future when God's kingdom will be established in ways impossible to humanity. Personal and social transformation is postponed into a future life.

The problem Thurman notes with the utopias of the first order is that the future is never open to all. Within such an eschatological view, salvation involves discrimination and selection. He writes:

Whatever the present experiences may be, for those who feel that they are saved, the transcendent future holds

a fulfillment not possible in the present.... The problem raised for those who are not of the Faith is not resolved.<sup>10</sup>

Thurman sees the exclusiveness of such a vision of the Kingdom of God as a tragic flaw. Nevertheless it reveals what the dreamer thinks of as the highest end, the most authentic unfolding of life at its best and highest.<sup>11</sup>

The second level of utopias presupposes confidence in the historical future.<sup>12</sup> With this kind of eschatology a temporal commitment to the creation of a just society and ultimately to a new humanity is possible. Gutierrez feels that only a vision of utopia can give economic, social and political action a human focus. Without it, humanity falls into bureaucratism, sectarianism and ever new structures which oppress the powerless. But for utopia validly to fulfill its role, it must be verified in social praxis. He continues,

[Utopia] ought to go side by side with the struggle for a more just society at all times. Without this critical and rational element of historical dynamism and creative imagination, science and political action see a changing reality slip out of their hands and easily fall into dogmatism. And political dogmatism is as worthless as religious dogmatism; both represent a step backward towards ideology.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, warns Gutierrez, utopias must be concretized and revised constantly. There is a constant need for eschatological imagining, dreaming and visioning in every age. Eschatology is not a matter of possessing inside information on the future, but of relying upon the gracious mystery of God to reveal the future in terms of the present.



As Richard B. Steele says:

In the face of this mystery, a reverent silence is certainly preferable to ignorant loquacity. But reverent silence must not be allowed to degenerate into mute indifference. There are some things we must speak about, even if words cannot supply a precise description. There are matters of such importance to the human heart that silence is impossible, even if speech is inadequate. And if an honest theology cautions us against idle speculation, it also gives birth to devout imagination. For this reason the saints and seers of fourty centuries have called upon parable and analogy to tell the truth about the Truth who transcends telling. What we cannot speak about we must image in wonder.<sup>14</sup>

2. Politics. One of the definitions of politics contained in Webster's dictionary is "the total complex of relations between people in society."<sup>15</sup> This is basically the definition used in speaking of politics in relation to eschatology and community. Politics is the discipline which concerns itself with how human beings can best organize, regulate and discipline themselves so that they might live together in community. It is a concern for the polis.

Human beings are social animals. Life involves the person-in-the-group and not independent islands of individual personalities. No individual is completely isolated. T.T. Swearingen points out that it is more accurate to speak of the person-in-society than the person and society since persons can never be separated from their relationships with others.<sup>16</sup> Every person is immersed in relationships with an ever widening radius - his family, his neighborhood, his race, his nation, all humanity. Those who are related in these various ways form communities. Every

community is a tenuous arrangement of powers. Every grouping of people has to work out some kind of a political system, i.e., rules and regulations of proper conduct. Thus, political concerns affect everyone.

Politics is concerned with governance in the temporal order. Because government necessitates systematically setting up rules, regulations and laws, politics becomes the focus for concerns about justice, liberty, and equality. It is the channel through which persons can work for change in society. It is the means whereby our utopian dreams become reality.

Within the United States there has been a concern to keep the church out of politics. This concern springs from a perspective that politics is a part of the temporal world which is passing away and unrelated to the true work of the church. But politics is necessary to life and cannot be divorced from religious concerns. It is good or bad as people make it so. The church needs to reclaim politics as a means by which good community life might be realized. It needs to integrate politics with eschatology in order to form community.

3. Community. Community is fundamentally a quality of human being together. When persons can be together in families, associations, neighborhoods, states, and nations in ways that are mutually affirming and healthful, then community has been established. Swearingen reminds us that

the one essential condition of a community is that its members feel themselves to be a social whole, that is, they feel a sense of belonging.<sup>17</sup> People feel that they belong when they share in the power and responsibilities of the group. Swearingen writes,

For the Christian, the term community implies the finest quality of fellowship that is possible for man to achieve. It is the type of fellowship which provides for all of its participants every opportunity to become the kind of persons which God intended each should become. In a true community, then, each member is concerned for the creating of the conditions under which each individual may develop to the fullest of his capacities. Community in its finest sense involves the delicate but inescapable balance between rights and duties, the privilege of self-fulfilment under God, and the obligation to enable others to achieve the same.<sup>18</sup>

The term community, thus, implies the finest quality of fellowship that it is possible for two or more persons to achieve. It is an experience in which the potential for individuals and societies is being actualized. Ultimately community demands that there be no barriers between any of God's creatures. The unity required for this kind of community can be achieved only on the basis of loyalty to the one God. All other loyalties divide.

Each person is related to several communities. A focus on community in Christian religious education must include the many institutions, organizations, agencies, and groups to which students belong. Anything that destroys the human dignity, that detracts from the inherent sacredness of persons, is inimical to community and needs to be combatted.

Community differs from utopia in that it is a lived

experience rather than a hoped for ideal. It is life lived on the plane of history. Building community may involve structural modifications in the way social life is organized in order for harmonious interaction among all people. This redistribution of power necessitates an understanding and application of politics.

Community is concerned with more than reform of society, however. It is focused on the re-creation of human beings, of society, of culture, of religion. Community goes deeper than righting the wrongs of society. It attempts to get at the roots of evil found within persons and institutions which guide the world towards destruction.<sup>19</sup> Unless people themselves, and their human relationships, are improved, the concern for community is futile.

### History and Present Practices

There have traditionally been three symbols that represent the Judeo/Christian vision of the future and which have given rise to community: the Jubilee, Shalom, and the Kingdom of God. In the Old Testament, Jubilee meant the release from enslavements and imprisonments which kept people from God and the fullness of life. Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace which denotes wholeness, health, prosperity and security, political and spiritual well-being. As Robert McAfee Brown writes:

Shalom indicates liberation, God's act of setting free,

and it promises blessing as one of the possibilities for human life. Shalom, in other words, is much more than the absence of war, and it is much more than "inner" serenity, which is how Christians often try to spiritualize it. By contrast, true shalom is almost shockingly materialistic: it has to do with the state of one's belly, whether it is full or empty, whether it is a source of health or disease; it has to do with having adequate shelter; it has to do with a security that is physical as well as spiritual. It is very earthy. So concern for shalom... involves seeing to it that people have enough to eat; that they are not undernourished or malnourished; that they can go to bed at night without fear that someone will spirit them off to prison; that the society will be so planned that there is food enough to go around; that the politics of the country (and the world) are so arranged that everybody's basic needs are met. Otherwise, no shalom?<sup>20</sup>

The concepts of Jubilee and shalom were certainly behind Jesus teaching of the Kingdom of God.

Visions of the future as Jubilee, Shalom and the Kingdom of God lead to a central missiological question, "What does God desire for the human future?". Christianity has traditionally claimed that God desires a righteous community in which personal sin and structural evil are eliminated. God desires a world community in which the walls that divide persons are broken down. God desires a community in which the poor and powerless are no longer oppressed. God desires a world at peace in which the weapons of warfare and violence are transformed into instruments for good. God desires a community where brokenness is transformed into wholeness, wounds are healed and the hungry are fed.

The whole of the biblical witness tells the story of God's efforts to redeem human history and bring it to

fulfillment. The role of the people of God in this story is to be both the agent of God's redemptive activity and a living model of the new creation. Christians have understood their commission as disciples of Jesus as focusing on all that God desires for the world, living toward that vision and sharing it with others, inviting them to also to fully invest their lives in bringing it about.

Christianity has from the very beginning been concerned for community despite the fact that it has many times served more as a stumbling block than a catalyst. With the emergence of incarnational spirituality community concerns are taking on a much more temporal and political flavor. Christian hopes for the future are becoming less otherworldly and more historical. In the past, faith and piety did not, for the most part, lead Christians to positions that challenged political and economic structures.<sup>21</sup>

Until recent decades Christian teaching did not stress commitment to social action and the challenging of unjust structures as an integral part of religious education.

But today there is much more awareness of personal responsibility for those forces that keep whole people oppressed and living in conditions that denigrate their dignity and ability to work out their own destiny. Today one continually hears calls for "education for justice and peace". In fact, some are claiming that justice and peace education must be the consitutive element of all religious education curriculum and educational processes.<sup>22</sup> The

intensity with which Christian religious educators have embraced peace education is linked to the specter of possible nuclear holocaust and the increasing ability of humanity to destroy the entire world. The concern for justice education is spurred by liberation theology and the "theologies of hope" that give voice to oppressed peoples especially in the Third World.

Peace and justice education is one of the ways that the church is pursuing its mission to build community. In this and other ways, the concern for community springs from an eschatological vision and a willingness to enter into the political process.

#### The Value of the Community Focus for Christian Religious Education

According to Howard Thurman, the drive towards community is a basic aspiration of the human spirit.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Christian religious education needs to promote and transform community living. In so doing Christian religious education teaches that Christian faith is to be lived as well as believed. It is orthopraxis as well as orthodoxy. A focus on community invites students to reflect upon the future in light of their hopes and dreams. It also invites them to actively work towards the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Education for community keeps hope alive. It emphasizes that people are not mere pawns in the movements

history. Human beings are creators of culture, transformers of history. Every individual has a voice in the destiny of the world. Such a realization brings great hope in a time when so many see destructive ends as being enevitable.

### Limitations

As a focus for Christian religious education, community has limitations just like the other foci that have been examined. The first limitation Christians must recognize is that whereas they are called to work for the establishment of the Kingdom, they can not inaugurate it. The Kingdom will come only when and how God determines. Human ability to create community is limited. Only God knows what the Kingdom will be finally. A certain humility and willingness to admit error are needed as we work toward community.

Christian religious educators who lead their students into social action on behalf of community need to beware of burnout. Educators can become over-optimistic about the capacity of education to effect change either in our students and/or the world. Then, frustration levels are easily reached. In consciously focusing on the ideal, persons can become intolerant of present circumstances which may lead to cynicism, judgmentalism, or dropping out of the struggle altogether. Christian religious educators need to guard against this possibility.



Finally, community, with its emphasis on transformation, needs to be balanced by an appreciation for the immanence of God. Stewardship education acts as a natural balance with its emphasis on the goodness of creation. We need constantly to keep in mind that reality is multidimensional and that life's meaning can be grasped in various ways. Community is but one focus of a Christian religious educational program that seeks to understand life's meaning. It must constantly be in dialogue with those other areas where religious meaning is found: liturgy, stewardship and Heisgeschichte.

Summary: The Educational Task

In advocating that community should be a primary focus of Christian religious education, this project advocates that education needs to help persons envision and politically work towards building community on all levels. This includes first of all keeping the dream of community alive, i.e. the utopian dream. Hopes and aspirations for the future need to be shared, examined and modified in the light of new situations. Secondly, Christian religious education needs to help students detect those forces which are inimical to community and work toward overcoming them. This necessitates a thorough analysis of problems and a willingness to take steps in a new direction. The larger the community, the more complex the problems become and the

slower the process of change. Much community building will necessitate long term commitments to social action.

Thirdly, Christian religious education needs to nurture the human yearning for community and promote an ever widening circle of community concern.

In a religious education program that consciously appropriates and builds upon incarnational spirituality, community replaces eschatology as one of the pillars upon which religious education is founded. This shift is a result of the concern to integrate the secular discipline of politics with the religious discipline of eschatology. In so doing, community also integrates the chronological and relational modes of knowing.

Community is a common biblical theme. The Bible not only advocates community, but provides several models of community. The disciplines of eschatology and politics, then, need to be woven into the biblical witness and mandate for community.

Methodologically, Christian religious education needs to model and demonstrate community as a part of its teaching. The classroom and the school represent a community within a community. The classroom is a laboratory for exploring interpersonal relationships, leadership, organization, group problem solving, and the many other dynamics that make up community living. The classroom is a microcosm in which community values can be experienced, reflected upon, and clarified in relationship to the many

other communities of which students are a part. Thus the action/reflection model proposed by Thomas Groome is especially relevant to the subject of community.<sup>24</sup>

Community, as a focus of Christian religious education integrates the creative envisioning of the future with hard headed knowledge about human relations and political power. It helps persons work towards a better life for all people in concrete ways. While the limitations of actual communities have to be acknowledged, education must also stress that no one is ever free of the responsibility to work towards community.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Community is a religious discipline applicable to education within all faith traditions. All societies are political. All people entertain hopes for the future. This chapter will examine what community, as the integration of eschatology and politics, would look like as a focus for Christian religious education. Other faith traditions can appropriate this model by substituting their own scriptures and traditions in the place of that which is distinctively Christian.

<sup>2</sup>See for example the following books by John Westerhoff: Will Our Children Have Faith? (New York: Seabury Press, 1983) and Learning Through Liturgy (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978)

<sup>3</sup>Sara Little, To Set One's Heart (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983)

<sup>4</sup>Howard Thurman, The Search for Common Ground (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973)

<sup>5</sup>Thurman, 44.

<sup>6</sup>Gutierrez, 233.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. 234-5

<sup>8</sup>As quoted by Thurman, 44.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>12</sup>Gutierrez, 213.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 237.

<sup>14</sup>Richard B. Steele, "Hope and Imagination," Alive Now!, 15:5 (September-October 1985) 5.

<sup>15</sup>Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: G & G Merriam, 1970)

<sup>16</sup>Tilford T. Swearingen, The Community and Christian Education (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1950) 44.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>19</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, "Shalom," Alive Now! 15:5 (September-October, 1985) 43.

<sup>20</sup>David Hollenbaugh, "Courage and Patience for Staying Power in the Pursuit of Peace and Justice." in Padraic O'Hare (ed.) Education for Peace & Justice (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 39.

<sup>21</sup>Margaret Brennan, "Sing a New Song unto the Lord: The Relationship Between Spirituality and Social Responsibility," in O'Hare, 212.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas H. Groome, "Religious Education for Justice by Educating Justly," in O'Hare, 81.

<sup>23</sup>This is a common theme in most of the writings of Howard Thurman.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980)

## SECTION III - CONTEXT

This project has thus far discussed the content of curricula. Using incarnational spirituality, five modes of knowing have been identified. It has been noted how these give rise to the various academic disciplines. Suggestions have been made for ways in which sacred and secular disciplines can be integrated to allow for a more comprehensive and meaningful educational approach.

A new approach to educational contexts is also suggested by incarnational spirituality. Content and context need to be mutually supportive. Thus, the final section will examine the implications of incarnational spirituality for the social structures of society as a whole and particularly of education. It suggests ways in which education might structurally integrate the sacred and the secular without violating the constitutional guarantee of the separation of church and state.

## CHAPTER 7

## EDUCATIONAL HISTORY AND PROBLEMS

"All too soon the present day with its dreams and plans becomes part of the past. Not always are the dreams fulfilled and the plans realized. This does not mean that we cease to dream and refuse to plan. We built on a dream which had its roots in Faith. When dreams fail because of rushing time, we renew our Faith and point to things Eternal. A greater future will come from the same Faith that built the past."

T. M. Hesburgh, president  
University of Notre Dame<sup>1</sup>

The following section is a call for the church rethink its 200 year support of the concept of parallel education via the state school and church school. In making this call there is no attempt to depreciate the good work that has been done through the Sunday School. Rather attention is called to what Hesburgh referred to above as a "dream that failed because of rushing time." It is time for the church to move on and, in Hesburgh's words, create "a greater future from the same Faith that built the past." It is time for a new approach to religious education.

## HISTORY

In this section an attempt will be made to trace how an educational system that was started by the church has become divorced from religion. The founders of the various educational enterprises in the United States were fully in

accord with the idea that religion is integral to education. Educational institutions were first begun to enable believers to read the Bible and understand sermons. Such institutions were viewed as Christian and Protestant. Schools were part of an interlocking colonial state-church system where home, congregation and school all confirmed the Protestant tradition as a fundamental part of American heritage and values.

Sunday schools were begun by Christians in an attempt to provide free education for those without the time or funds for formal education. Beginning in England in the 1780's, the Sunday School affected significant changes and had a persuasive effect on the emerging social order. Thus the idea and the value of free education for every member of society was a direct outgrowth of a missiological concern of the church.

During the years leading up to the Civil War Protestant efforts at education underwent what Robert W. Lynn calls a "quiet transformation"<sup>2</sup> leading to a parallel or dual system of education. Such a system was not the result of a conscious plan but evolved somewhat by default as the state took over what had traditionally been part of the work of the church. During this period there was a growing recognition that the general education of the public was beneficial not only for individuals but for society as a whole. Church members who made up only 10 to 20 percent of the population at that time were unable to meet this



enormous challenge out of their own resources and thus turned to the state for help.

The idea that the state might support schools operated by the churches was entertained and even put into practice in New York state. However, the antagonism between Protestants and Roman Catholics and the distrust among Protestants themselves steered public sentiment away from this option. Thus, denominational rivalries prevented education from proceeding under the auspices of the church and drove the American public towards "secular" schooling. The commitment to state-supported and controlled education was admittedly more secular than many would have desired and from the beginning there were those who protested such state control.

The non-religious nature of the schools of this time was a non-denominationalism within Protestantism. The Protestant ethos permeated the schools. Catholics, uncomfortable with the use of the Protestant Bible (King James Version) and other educational resources, withdrew from the state-supported educational enterprise to form schools of their own. But Protestant support for state schools that reinforced Protestant thought, became more and more uncritical and absolute. Lynn writes:

What had been, in the beginning, a matter of social necessity and a way of keeping civil peace was transformed in later years into a matter of belief, an article of faith in the unofficial but operative credo of American Protestantism [i.e., support for public schools].<sup>3</sup>

As state schools became an unquestioned part of Protestant educational strategy, the Sunday School was converted into an agency of the churches. State schools were viewed as necessary for the promotion of Christian civilization through their teaching of basic Christian morality. The Sunday School supplemented this teaching in morals by focusing on sectarian differences and ecclesiastical concerns. State schools thus became responsible for the formation of Christian citizens and church schools became correspondingly responsible for the development of good church members. This resulted in the domestication, or inward movement of the Sunday School as noted by Seymour, Foster and O'Gorman.<sup>4</sup>

By the beginning of the 20th century the public school and the Sunday School had formed what seemed a natural alliance. Lynn summarizes the dominant perspective of the time as providing

a "blank check" confidence in the public schools, a corresponding optimism about the adequacy of slender marginal efforts in church education (that is, the Sunday school), and a conviction that these parallel institutions, although under different auspices and bound by somewhat different curricular responsibilities, were still yoked together by a common concern for moral education.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that schools were replacing the church as the center of social/cultural life they were viewed as worthy of church support. The schools, it was argued, could do what the church could not: act as the symbol of an eternal unifying spirit for the many immigrants coming to

the United States.

But as times changed, concerns began to be raised about the adequacy of this parallel arrangement. As the nation moved towards industrialization, education commanded more and more of children's time. Consider that in 1870 only a little over half of American children were enrolled in schools for an average of 45 days. By 1918 more than three-quarters of the nation's children were attending school for 90 days a year or more.<sup>6</sup> While time spent in secular education was multiplying, time spent in religious education was remaining the same or even diminishing.

To address this development a number of movements were begun: 1) Vacation Bible School, 2) Released Time Education - a program where the schools agreed to release one hour a week of the children's time to churches for religious instruction, 3) Shared Time Education - a program with a much more substantial division of the child's week between state-supported and church schools, 4) and the After School Program. These innovations bolstered the church's educational efforts but did not challenge the parallel institutions concept.

Perhaps the most forward looking of these programs was the Malden Plan developed by Walter S. Athearn. Athearn perceived that the Sunday School was becoming increasingly marginal to general education which was undergoing rapid expansion and professionalization. He held to three tenets: 1) that no education is complete which ignores the religious

element, 2) that Sunday Schools could not furnish an adequate religious education for Christians and 3) that the religious element could not be furnished satisfactorily by state schools. Thus the church had to have a share in week day educational efforts. Athearn further acknowledged that the church and public schools were competitors for the time and loyalty of children.

Athearn's plan called for the maintenance of a system of week day church schools that were equally efficient as state schools. Children's time would be divided between the two school systems somewhat equally. The church schools would be staffed by professionally trained teachers and supervised by a community board of religious education, free from ecclesiastical control.

The Malden Plan, along with other efforts at integrating religious education and general education gained momentum until the 1930's at which time the nation suffered both an economic and ideological depression. Educational efforts on all fronts were severely cut back due both to the depression and dissent among the ranks of professional religious educators.

After World War II new life was breathed into religious educational efforts. Emphasis was placed on the question, "What can religion contribute to education?" rather than the question, "What can education contribute to religion?"<sup>7</sup> The new question was raised in response to the observation that little by little religion had begun to be

excluded from state schools. But despite high sounding rhetoric Christian educators struggled unsuccessfully to effect any noticeable religious consciousness in state schools.

Efforts to reenvigorate the Sunday School were not much more successful. A move was made to better the Sunday School by developing a partnership with the family. However, none of the mainline denominations had any substantial success working with the family-Sunday School model. Efforts were made to update curriculum along lines of prevalent theological thought. Yet the church continued to assume the parallel arrangement of state and church schools. The churches supported the status quo and did not bring into question the eventual implications of the ideal of separation of church and state.

In recent years the problems arising for education because of the separation of church and state have become obvious. Perhaps laypersons have recognized them even more clearly than professional educators. Yet such educators are predicting that a new occasion in American education is in the making. Such an occasion is spurred by the 1962 Supreme Court ruling disallowing a short "nondenominational prayer" in New York state schools. One year later the Court ruled that devotional reading of the Bible and the use of the Lord's Prayer in state school classrooms is unconstitutional. The McCollum decision declaring sectarian education on school premises during school hours to be

unconstitutional was a serious set back for the released time educational programs.

Such rulings have awakened church leaders and educators to new realities. No longer can state schools be viewed as operating within the Protestant ethos. Lynn calls upon Protestants to set aside their illusions that the state schools could (or should) any longer be expected to serve as educational adjuncts for evangelizing America.<sup>8</sup> In fact state schools systems are avoiding any and all contact with religion in any of its forms.<sup>9</sup> This has led to education which attempts to divide secular and religious concerns and which has resulted in confusion, turbulence, and heated discussions. As John Westerhoff has noted:

There is little agreement on what a public school is, let alone its purpose - what it shall do. There is little agreement on the nature and purpose of religion, let alone how to address the truth claims of the various and diverse faith communities which exist within a pluralistic culture. There is little agreement on the nature of religious "neutrality", let alone whether such is possible or advantageous.<sup>10</sup>

In a society as pluralistic as the United States today, it is unrealistic and irresponsible to expect all schools to operate within a single faith tradition. Yet every school needs an agreed upon perspective on fundamental issues in order to clarify its purpose and direction. The public is faced with these facts: 1) education without a consensus on fundamental issues is chaotic and lacks purpose, 2) to continue to support a system in which the only free education is based on one ideological or faith

perspective is a violation of the rights of those outside that perspective who are mandated by law to attend school, and 3) it is impossible for a school to incorporate all religious and philosophical traditions into its curriculum. State schools, unable to maintain their Protestant Christian perspective, and finding it impossible to incorporate all religious perspectives, have opted for "religiously neutral" education. Such neutrality which is itself an ideological perspective that cannot avoid the accusations of "secular humanism" and "scientism", is precipitating a major crisis in education.

Education via state-supported schools is at an impass. In order to effectively carry forward both the goals of an educated public and a faithful church there must be a re-examination of public support for the parallel institutions approach to education. Now is the time for religious bodies to join with the general public in a common search for answers to education.

#### PROBLEMS

We live in a time when knowledge in all fields is exploding. The knowledge humankind has attained through education is influencing our worldview, our ideologies, our concepts of space, time, matter. To keep abreast of new data persons are being taught how to think rather than what to think. Students are encouraged to explore, hypothesize,

experiment, create. But for the most part they are currently encouraged to do so without the benefit of religious reflection or a faith perspective.

In Christendom, this has led to what John Cobb terms the inability of the church to think.<sup>11</sup> He notes that the church, which at one time was in the forefront of the intellectual world has today ceased to grapple creatively with new concerns. The church has settled for repeating answers from the past rather than finding answers for the present. The most intelligent within society are driven away from the church because of its inability to think creatively.

There is general agreement that the church has tended to ignore significant cultural changes and uncritically accept their impact on society.<sup>12</sup> The result, as Martin Marty has shown, is to "practically and ideologically exclude the church from major areas of public moral and ethical decision."<sup>13</sup> The role the church can play in shaping the character of a citizen or the public as a whole seems significantly reduced from former times. The church, once at the center of public life has become more and more marginalized.

Besides bringing negative consequences upon itself, the inward, individualistic posture of the church has created a void in public life. There is an absence in our society of criteria generated by religious faith to guide decision making and behavior in the political realm, in the



marketplace, in leisure activities, and in the home. This is leading to a crisis of national self-understanding and direction.

The religious void in public consciousness may have spurred the rise of mental illness. Matthew F. Allen notes that mental illness is endemic in our culture, a phenomenon integrally related to the void of religious faith.<sup>14</sup> Carl Jung is reported to have said that of all the patients who came to him in his lifetime of practice, there was not a single one whose basic problem was not the absence of a vital religious faith.<sup>15</sup>

The church's failure in American education is largely responsible for its failures elsewhere. Advanced societies are highly educated societies. The value of education has become a foregone conclusion in most countries of the world. In the United States, twelve years of education are mandated by law. Even more education or training is seen as essential to successfully enter the work force. Education is fast becoming a lifetime endeavor.

The inward, individualistic posture of the churches over the past half century has had negative consequences for American education and negative consequences for the church as well. The church has lost much of its ability to relate its faith to important public issues, and the public has lost its sense of a transcendent direction and purpose.

Seymour, O'Gorman and Foster charge that the key to understanding this sad state of affairs and to correcting it

is to focus on the church's responsibilities in the area of education. For the church to restrict its educational ministry to itself, ignores its calling. Let us begin, then, discussing the problems facing education by first focusing on the churches' educational endeavors.

### The Sunday School

Concern over the Sunday School has been growing for several decades. Some have called for its outright demise and others have sought new alternatives.<sup>16</sup> Evidence of the decline of the Sunday School is clearly evident. Religious illiteracy seems to be on the rise despite the best efforts of Sunday School teachers and professional religious educators. Most of today's church goers are ignorant in terms of Biblical knowledge let alone in having attained a sense of how religion impinges upon their every-day life. Few church schools have the resources to provide children, youth, and adults with a comprehensive program in religious education, and fewer yet command the commitment to fill such a program. But though failure has been conceded, the concept of parallel education that undergirds the Sunday School has only recently been challenged. The following section adds to that challenge by noting problems in the aim, scope, timing, and personnel of the Sunday School which the parallel approach to education has fostered.

Aim. Tillich has written that "the problem of the church school is... the problem of the relation of Christianity and culture generally and Christianity and education especially."<sup>17</sup> Tillich saw the problem as an ongoing one that needs to be solved again and again in every generation. The preceeding section suggests problems the Sunday School has run into in terms of its aim. For two centuries Protestant churches in the United states have endorsed a parallel approach to education. Alongside state-supported educational institutions the churches have sought to organize Christian educational efforts. Ideally children were to attend state schools five days a week to receive their secular education and attend church schools one day a week for religious instruction.

The Church school strategy initially was based on the assumption that the church could adequately fulfill its educational responsibilities by copying methodologies used in state schools while focusing on religious content. If the church school could be graded, organized and professionalized like the state school, the progressives felt it would continue to be a crucial force in the education of the nation.<sup>18</sup>

Yet objections to this popular aim of the Sunday School have consistently been voiced by perceptive Christian educators. William Bower considered church education efforts to have failed because they maintained the separation of religion from education, perpetuated

sectarianism, and did not reach the entire populace.<sup>19</sup> More recently, Seymour, Foster and O'Gorman, in their book, The Church in the Education of the Public, charge that the Sunday School which began as a true mission program, has been gradually "domesticated" until it has lost all power to affect society.<sup>20</sup> With the rise of the state-supported school system and the concept of "parallel institutions" the Sunday School gradually became an agency of the denominations and missiological concerns were replaced by institutional concerns. With general education being turned over to the state, religious education became a means of gathering church members and emphasizing sectarian differences. The Sunday School became a supplement to general education where public concerns became focused. Religious education gradually was restricted to the arena of personal faith.

This "domestication" and "individualization" of the church's educational efforts has increasingly dominated the educational commitments of church leaders since the great depression, and especially after World War II.<sup>21</sup> Seymour, Foster and O'Gorman charge that for the most part the churches today have lost sight of their educational mission and are concentrating their energies on educating people into church life and ecclesiastical responsibilities. Christian religious education has been turned into institutional survival.

Seymour, Foster, and O'Gorman consider the Sunday

School to have perverted its true aim when it became an agency of the church rather than a mission outreach program. Its aim went amiss on two accounts: 1) when church education was subordinated to state-controlled schooling and the ecology of the education of the public was ignored; and 2) when a commitment to public life was confused with a focus on individual religious development.<sup>22</sup>

Scope. Criticisms of the scope of the Sunday School refer back to comments made earlier regarding the sectarian nature of the "domesticated" Sunday School. Due to the endorsement of the parallel institutions concept, the Sunday School became unconcerned with education except in those areas that were overtly religious. Even then, Protestant churches concerned themselves over much with the teaching of doctrine and their particular view of the Bible. The scope of religious education in the churches primarily served to promote sectarian loyalties.

As discovered in Chapter 2, there are five foci upon which Christian religious education should be built. These foci are 1) liturgy, which integrates mysticism and art; 2) stewardship, which integrates doctrine and science; 3) community, which integrates eschatology and politics; 4) Heilsgeschichte, which integrates theology and history; and 5) Bible study, which needs to be integrated into each of the other disciplines.

Timing. One of the reasons for the narrow scope in church education is that the churches have had so little time in which to accomplish their educational aims. This results in Christian religious education which ignores various aspects of religion and fails to provide a wholistic perspective. When the parallel institutions concept was first developed, time spent in Sunday School was somewhat on a par with time spent in state schools. But whereas general education has expanded to fill a large part of a child's week, time spent in religious education has remained the same or perhaps diminished. Commitments to other social activities today take children away from church which was once the center of a community's social life.

Religious educators can expect to see their students no more than 50 minutes a week. During that time they not only have to form a learning community out of persons who may have little contact with each other during the week, but also cram as much information as they can into that time. To cover in one period all subjects that have been noted as being important to Christian religious education, would mean that students could spend but 12 minutes on any one subject. And if the full hour were to be devoted exclusively to one subject on a rotating basis, it would be six weeks before the same subject would come up again. The inability, especially of young children, to remember from week to week would cause discontinuity and precious time would have to be diverted to reviewing previous lessons.

It is little wonder that the little time religious educators have is used to fortify the ecclesiastical system. Devoting time to concerns outside the system is a luxury church education simply can't afford. There is not enough time to adequately cover the educational concerns of the congregation let alone the kinds of religious concerns being raised in Section II of this project.

Personnel. In addition to the problems of aim, scope and timing, church education also faces the problem of personnel. In an age where religion is a more and more complicated subject to teach precisely because the day-to-day decisions it is supposed to guide are more and more complex, the church is still relying on volunteers to conduct its educational ministry. William E. Brown notes that

in today's world, the teaching of religion, involving the teaching of wisdom, values, reasons and applications is far more complicated than the teaching of English or philosophy. Yet no expert has ever advocated entrusting parents with teaching English or philosophy to their children, even in homes where excellent English is spoken and a wholesome philosophy is lived.<sup>23</sup>

The idea that we need professional Christian religious education teachers is today either acknowledged (resulting in a difficult time recruiting laypersons to volunteer to teach even the lowest grades) or is disregarded (indicating a general disrespect for religious knowledge as opposed to other forms of knowledge). All in all, little incentive is given to persons to prepare themselves for

teaching in the churches. Mostly, the churches rely on untrained volunteers who are becoming more and more unwilling to give of their time. The few professional Christian religious educators the churches do employ are paid substantially less than other ministers.

With this lack of commitment to education within the church it is understandable why the Sunday School has ceased to reach beyond the faith community. Unless radical changes can be made the church will continue to become more marginalized within society and religious concerns will continue to be divorced from educational concerns.

### State Supported Schools

Schooling in this country of all varieties is presently in the midst of a crisis of confidence. Assailed on all sides for the sterility of its curriculum and instruction, its lack of attention to creativity and aesthetic imagination, and its inability clearly to articulate the values and ideals most worth communicating to youth, American education needs a heavy infusion of respectful surveillance and review of its goals and methods.<sup>24</sup>

Robert W. Zuber, Jr.

State-supported education since the 1960's has been characterized as racist, authoritarian, trendy, academically and socially permissive, irreligious, an agency for social change, an instrument for perpetuating the status quo, and generally unresponsive to both individual and public needs.<sup>25</sup>

James C. Carper suggests that this dissulusionment with public education is a result of the ferment of the sixties



which produced a new shift in the American belief-value system, a transformation of our world view that may be the most drastic in our history.<sup>26</sup> It is the conflict over belief-value systems and world views within state schooling that is the focus of this sub-section.

Ideals, Morals and Values. With the recent findings of the Supreme Court regarding the place of religion in education, state schools are facing two important questions. The first has to do with what their responsibility is concerning the teaching of ideals, values and morals. The second is whether ideals, values and morals can be divorced from religion.

Educators both inside and outside the church have tended to agree that schools have a responsibility for teaching ideals, values and morals. Indeed there is agreement that there is no such thing as value free education. In recent decades, progressive religious educators have optimistically endorsed "values education" as an adequate replacement for the once prevalent Protestant ethos in state schooling. But there has not been any consensus on which morals, values and ideals should be taught. Peter Schrag has described this development:

The moral certitudes of traditional America were all part of the school system; when they were finally challenged, they were challenged not by pluralism in religion, by atheistic judges, or by a new surge of constitutional separatism, but by an empirical diet they were never meant to withstand: Heisenberg and Einstein, Lennin and Castro, Hitler and Mao, Ford and Carnegie.

So far, however, America has found no official substitute for the old certitudes. During the past fifty years its official policies have shifted all the way from moral progressivism, motivated by a desire to restore the blessings associated with an earlier day, to a pragmatic but optimistic liberalism, and then to a complacent utilitarianism, rooted in an affirmation that this is a Complicated World.<sup>27</sup>

With the unraveling of the moral certitudes Americans had assumed, schools have found themselves charged with the responsibility for character education, but with no common view as to what this entails. They have attempted to replace standard Protestant values with religiously "neutral" values but this has led to the charge that state schools are promoting a religion of secular humanism and scientism.<sup>28</sup> Does the acknowledgement of the impossibility of "value-less education" lead to the concomitant impossibility of "religionless education"? This issue is still under debate.

In his article, "Religious Values and Secular Humanism in the Schools", Robert L. Van Dale compares the views of three religious bodies concerning the interrelationship of values and religion in education.<sup>29</sup> The first by the Roman Catholic bishops of Pennsylvania issued in 1976 charges that values should not and cannot be divorced from religion. Therefore, provisions need to be made for the sectarian teaching of values in state schools. A second statement issued by the American Jewish Committee in 1979 insists that moral and spiritual values must be stressed without reference to religion or the religious as

"ultimate sources of values".<sup>30</sup> This statement sternly warns against state schools furthering religion. A third statement by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is somewhere between the Jewish and the Roman Catholic statement. It acknowledges that the teaching of moral values has a legitimate place in the state school curriculum and such values cannot be completely divorced from specific religious understandings. However, state schools should not teach sectarian moral or spiritual values. All three of these statements endorse the objective study of religion as it relates to history, literature and the social sciences, however.

The Roman Catholic bishops call for a reversal of the McCollum decision allowing for released time religious education within state schools. The American Jewish Committee rejects this proposal but endorses the concept of shared time in which part of the school day is made available for religious instruction taking place off state school property. Both solutions can be classified within the "parallel institutions" concept of education which has prevailed in the United States for two centuries.

Released Time Education. There are problems with both the proposals for released time and shared time. Let us consider the bishops' proposal first. The bishops acknowledge that there is no valueless education and thus no religionless education. Religion, even sectarian religion,

must be allowed a place in the state schools. They propose that such sectarian religious teaching be relegated to released time programs. Yet the implication that all the religious values underlying education can be culled out of other classrooms and deposited in the released time classroom is contrary to what Catholics themselves would view as good epistemology. In an article by Elmer John Thiessen, a strong argument is made for the idea that a curriculum designed from a Christian perspective and another from a secular perspective will be radically different even in subjects like mathematics and physics. He argues:

Religion can, and for the Christian, must be seen as bringing an added dimension to the other forms of knowledge. For a school to limit itself to a curriculum which includes all the forms of knowledge except religion is to offer an incomplete curriculum. For the Christian, God is to be understood as the source of all knowledge and truth. Also, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" according to many biblical writers. The Christian would therefore want to see these "added" truths taught in school and even occasionally stressed in a class in mathematics, history or physics. For the Christian, the study in any area should ultimately lead to worship. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God".<sup>31</sup>

Thiessen agrees with the previously reported findings that the forms of knowledge are not autonomous. Religion is interrelated with all subject matter. The Catholic bishops' proposal for released time sectarian education is certainly a desire to get some acknowledgement of the religious dimension of reality back into state-supported education, but it is totally inadequate when viewed in terms of the interrelationship of religious

knowledge with other forms of knowledge.

Religiously Neutral Education. By and large the same argument level at released time education can be leveled against shared time education. Both propose a secular curriculum supplemented by a religious curriculum. Ultimately what this leads to is not a complementary but a conflicting educational approach.

Van Dale notes how this conflict arises by pointing to the U.S. Supreme Court's suggestion that world views or value systems may be recognized as functioning in the same ways as do the traditional religions in the lives of their respective adherents. "If a worldview or value system is implicit in all education," he argues, "and these worldviews or value systems can be described as 'religious' there is no religion-free education. Education in state related schools is education-cum-religion."<sup>32</sup> Van Dale has to go along with the observers of the religion-in-the-schools scene who note that "the public schools teach religion whether they teach religion or not - i.e., whether they do it consciously or not, the public schools are teaching about religion."<sup>33</sup>

James Wood defines "secular" as referring to the realm of the human without any prior assumptions/assertions regarding the realm of the transcendent.<sup>34</sup> It is this idea of the world as "secular" that concerns Christians and other persons with a religious world view. As the following quote from the Catholic bishops notes, the replacing of a

religious worldview with a secular worldview is just as much a violation of constitutional rights as adopting a single religious perspective:

In recent years a critical dilemma has emerged in public education, a dilemma which involves millions of American children and their parents. On the one hand, education cannot be free of values: public educators rightly state that the public schools promote values, and citizens, especially parents, rightly expect them to do so. On the other hand, the law of the land, as interpreted by the courts, prohibits any values in public education except secularistic ones. How, then, are the religious rights of conscience of children and parents who do not accept the secularistic view of human nature and destiny to be respected in an educational system where only secularistic values are allowed? There is also a more poignant aspect to the dilemma: How to prevent the rights of such children and parents from being violated in such a system?<sup>35</sup>

Van Dale concludes that "virtually any form of 'secular' education can be judicially classed as 'religious' and, as such, open to rejection by some who cannot reconcile their own religious convictions with a public education which, they believe, runs counter to these convictions."<sup>36</sup> Matthew F. Allen adds even more caution for those fearful of the secularistic tone of education in state schools when he warns that secularism has its own Pied Pipers, among them teachers who communicate in the classroom a crass materialism and insensitivity to what really matters, with never a voice raised against their stance within the walls of the schools.<sup>37</sup>

Religious Objectivity. A final issue to be raised in regard to religion in state schools is the acknowledged

need for objective study of religion. It has been pointed out that in other countries where the separation of church and state is not so much a part of the national mind set, that classes in the objective study of religion are commonplace. In England, for example, the teaching of religion in all schools is mandated by law. However, upon examination, this objective teaching of religion is a far cry from the type of religious instruction that leads to the development of mature Christians or members of any other religious tradition. Robin Minney points to why this is so in his article on "Religious Education and the Crisis of Literacy".<sup>38</sup> Miney argues that children's perceptions are not purely cognitive but are shot through with value and feelings from the very first, and that therefore education into "objective" thinking presents special problems. He states:

Modern education tries to get pupils to stand back from their involvements in order to practice radical and critical openness. This applies to religion if students are able to hold their emotions and aspirations at arm's length in order to consider them with detachment... But many pupils cannot stand back and still retain commitment. Religion by its nature is concerned with values, and thus tends to resist scientific objectivity. Too many people confronted with the crisis fall into one of two ways: either they objectify religion like other school subjects and lose interest, or else they shut their own religion off from any kind of critical understanding and verge on schizophrenia.<sup>39</sup>

Religion, by its very nature, needs to be studied from within a committed context. Only to the committed are the essential truths of a religion revealed.

William K. Kay and Fred Hughes write of the biblical notion of knowledge as being, in part, personal and experiential. They state:

There is a way, then, in which intellectual knowledge brings about conviction of truth, presumably after it has been tried against experience or ratified by revelation. Revelation is, indeed, central to any Christian epistemology.<sup>40</sup>

Yet state schools place no value on revealed (i.e. confessional) knowledge, and teaching from a standpoint of conviction is precisely what public schools are prohibited from doing. As George R. LaNoue explains:

Public school teaching, as is stated in the teacher manuals of any public system, must strive toward a balanced neutral presentation of religious questions. Descriptive or empirical teaching about religion is acceptable, but teaching supported by public funds must avoid normative teaching or teaching for commitment."<sup>41</sup>

This sharp distinction between objective teaching and teaching for commitment is a dubious contribution to good educational policy when viewed from a Christian perspective. It is absolutely impossible to educate for religious commitment in state schools today. And it is equally as impossible to leave out this element in any vital religious education of the public. It is this, ultimately, that should prompt the church to abandon the parallel concept of education.

If it were simply a matter of encouraging everyone to develop personal commitments and share these diverse points of view for discussion, the church could endorse such a program of religious instruction. But this is precisely



what the schools avoid. As Edgar Z. Friedenberg points out, "When a specific conflict arises, the school almost automatically seeks to mediate rather than to clarify. It assesses the power of the conflicting interests, works out a compromise among them, and keeps its name out of the papers."<sup>42</sup> This avoidance of religious issues is not the kind of education that the church can support as contributing to wholistic education.

### Parochial and Christian Day Schools

In the last 15-20 years the disillusionment and dissatisfaction with state-operated schooling has been growing, especially among Evangelical Protestants. Though state schools have been criticized as academically and socially permissive, generally unresponsive to both individual and public needs, the greatest complaint is that secular humanism and scientism has replaced Christianity as the basis of education. Though mainline Protestants have turned a deaf ear to such charges and generally continued to endorse the state schools, more and more people are beginning to understand the validity and importance of the Evangelical accusation. Charles E. Rice, a professor of law at Notre Dame, has argued:

If the objecting parents are correct in their claim that the public schools are promoting the tenets of a secular religion, it must be on the basis that the nonjudgemental treatment of moral issues without any affirmation of the supernatural is itself an implicit

assertion that contradictory moral positions are equally tenable, that there is no objective and binding moral order, that the supernatural is not a necessary factor in the making of moral decisions. It is not unreasonable to describe such teaching as an implicit affirmation of a position that, in its relativism and secularism, is authentically religious. The Christian parents' concern is therefore understandable.<sup>43</sup>

The same phenomenon that made Catholics uncomfortable in the Protestant dominated schools of the 19th century, is making Evangelicals uncomfortable today. Like Catholics in earlier times, Evangelicals are taking their children out of state schools and developing schools of their own.

Awakening, as well as protest and alienation, is involved in the move away from state schools. People are beginning to realize that all education is value laden and that religious concerns do permeate all education. Evangelicals, rather than mainline Protestants at this point, are grappling with the consequences the growing pluralism in our society. They are questioning the historic American commitment to state schools and the dualistic parallel approach to education.

Since the 1960s Evangelical Protestants have been establishing Christian Day Schools at a phenomenal rate; perhaps three a day.<sup>44</sup> This represents the first widespread secession from the public school pattern since the movement toward Catholic schools in the 19th century. Bruce Cooper, an authority on private school enrollment trends, maintains that the private sector in general, and non-Catholic

religious schools in particular, will enjoy substantial growth throughout the 1980's and perhaps enroll 15 percent of the school-age population by 1990.<sup>45</sup> The Association of Christian Schools International, a service organization with 2000 member schools across the country and overseas, projects a steady growth pattern into the next century.

Advantages. While a variety of reasons are given by parents for choosing to enroll their children in private Christian Day Schools, by far the greatest reason is that they want a Christ-centered education within a Christian context rather than a human-centered education where religious concerns are ignored. They want an education that supports biblical values and beliefs taught in the home and church.

This ability to ideologically bring together home, school and church is perhaps the greatest advantage of parochial and Christian day schools. Once again, as in the colonial period, there is a coordination among major institutions of society. The church and family support the school, the church and school support the family, and the family and school support the church. Such harmonization contributes to a sense of community and an integrated learning environment. Schools seek to foster such community by directly involving parents and the resources of the church in school programs and projects.

Because the governing boards of most parochial and

Christian day schools are small and drawn from the church community, parents feel they have more input into school policy and therefore more control in their children's education. Class size in these schools is generally smaller than in state schools, and thus students receive more attention. Teachers also feel they have more access both to the administration and parents in church related schools. Better communication between parents and administrators, teachers and students, teachers and administrators, teachers and parents, makes for a good learning environment.

Another advantage of church related schools is that they contribute to long term growth for the churches both in the area of numbers and religious commitment. The author's own studies reveal that approximately one third of the students enrolled in non-Catholic church related schools are from families unaffiliated with the sponsoring church. Some of these families are active members of other churches but many are marginally churched or unchurched. There appears to be a steady attraction of these latter families toward active participation and membership in a church. It is clear that the church feeds into the school and the school feeds into the church. Such a tried and true method of evangelization should not be overlooked by churches who are struggling to maintain membership, let alone grow. As a means of institutional church growth Christian day schools are much better designed to attract new members than the current Sunday School.

But growth in numbers, important though that may be, is not the only kind of growth schools foster. Churches with schools seem to command a higher commitment from their members. Schools reinforce the commitment already present among parents willing to pay the costs of private education by educating the whole family in Christian living. Many elementary and secondary schools offer educational programs for parents and families, thus expanding the educational ministry of the local church. Education of the family also happens indirectly as children reflect and communicate about the Christian aspects of their education. The fact that churches that sponsor Christian day schools are numerically larger and have a more committed membership than other churches should not be dismissed lightly.

Myths. Yet there are problems for church related education as well. Before noting these, however, two myths need to be cleared away. Private Christian day schools have been criticized in recent years for being racist. While there were certainly some schools started in the 1960s to avoid forced integration, and while segregation may still be found in isolated instances, it is not characteristic of the Christian day school movement as a whole. The ACSI specifically prohibits member schools from discriminating on the basis of race or religious affiliation. In the author's visits to parochial and Christian day schools in southern California, she found them all to be racially integrated.

In fact, some of the schools had a greater percentage of minority students state schools. There is reason to believe that there are some private schools that do a better job at integration than state schools.

Myth number two is that Christian day schools are academically weak. Again, there may be isolated instances where this is true, but as a whole, private schools are more concerned than public schools in their students' academic achievement. ACSI statistics reveal that their students consistently score higher than the national average on the Stanford Achievement Test.<sup>46</sup> Academics is the major reason for unchurched parents to enroll their children in private Christian schools. Class size is usually smaller and students receive more individualized attention. In addition, private schools that are able to permanently expell problem students face fewer discipline problems which detract from learning.

Hierarchical Spirituality. Though it can be argued that private schools are better situated to offer wholistic education where religion is fully integrated into the curriculum, very few, if any, are coming close to the model that has been proposed based on incarnational spirituality. Rather, most Christian schools have reverted to an hierarchical spirituality where religion dictates, rather dialogues with other disciplines.

Those schools most closely approaching the model

that has been advocated are the Catholic parochial schools. But they are parochial schools. Their first commitment is to educating the children of the parish. Today these schools are cutting back rather than expanding and there is not enough room even for the children of the parish, let alone the unchurched. For the most part, the Catholic parochial school system is a system closed to outsiders.

Lutheran, Evangelical, and Adventist schools are more open to including students from outside their communion but by and large they are hierarchical in their approach to education. These schools were mostly begun in reaction to reductionistic and humanistic worldviews (spiritualities). They appear to be more concerned with reinstituting ecclesiastical control than with finding new ways to integrate religious and secular concerns. These schools oppose any government intervention in their educational efforts and are therefore opposed to tuition tax credits or a voucher system.<sup>47</sup> In fact some schools are so fearful of involvement with the government that they refuse government food subsidies and every other kind of aid now available to private schools. For the most part, these schools evidence little ability to dialogue with the larger society and view their task primarily in terms of providing a protective learning environment for their own constituencies.

Biblicism. A second problem with Christian day schools is what can be termed biblicism. In most Christian

day schools the religious education program consists exclusively of Bible study. Only in rare instances are other religious subjects taught. Only in Catholic schools is specific attention given to inner spiritual growth. No schools seem to include in their religious education curriculum a concern for stewardship, community, liturgy or Heilsgeschichte as they have been envisioned in this project. And though every school has some kind of worship experience periodically, services are conducted outside the classroom and are, for the most part, unrelated to the learning happening in class. All religious concerns are subordinated to biblical study if touched on at all. In some schools a pledge to the Bible is recited at the beginning of the school day along with pledges to the American and Christian flag. The Bible is not at the heart of religious education lessons - it is the religious education lesson. Curriculum materials serve to direct students to various parts of the Bible (most times not contextually related).

Biblicism can also be seen in the way some Christian day schools teach other subjects. Most disturbing is the use of the Bible in science courses. Here the Bible is viewed as having no limitations and therefore deference is made to it as the supreme authority, not only in matters of faith and practice, but in science, history, and art as well. Any scientific truth that might call into question a literal reading of the Bible as the infallible Word of God is rejected. This stance that focuses on the Bible and



refuses to integrate it with other sources of truth is just as defective an educational approach as that which Evangelicals complain of in state schools.

Finances. One problem that all private schools face, a problem that goes beyond educational content and stance, is financing the schools themselves. Presently, church related schools have four possible sources of revenue: tuition, financial support from the sponsoring church, charitable contributions, and money raising projects. Compared to state-supported schools, private schools operate on a shoestring. Salaries are 15-20% lower than in state schools. With educational costs escalating, many private schools are scrambling to survive financially. Even now the cost of tuition keeps many families from participating in private education.

The inability to integrate religious and secular disciplines, Biblical sectarianism, and financial worries plague private Christian schools today and prevent widespread support for this movement. Faced with these problems and the problems in state schools, many people are left trying to decide which is the lesser of two evils. But might there be another alternative? Is it possible that an educational system could be developed in which there is cooperation between the public and private sectors? A system that could incorporate the best of both worlds and

avoid the problems? To such a possibility we now turn our attention.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>William E. Brown and Andrew M. Greeley, Can Catholic Schools Survive? New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970) 59.

<sup>2</sup>Robert W. Lynn, Protestant Strategies in Education (New York: Association Press, 1964) 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>4</sup>Jack Seymour, Robert T. O'Gorman and Charles R. Foster, The Church in the Education of the Public (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984)

<sup>5</sup>Lynn, 57.

<sup>6</sup>R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1953) 408, as reported by Lynn, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Lynn, 38.

<sup>8</sup>As reported by Robert L. Van Dale, "Religious Values and Secular Humanism," Religious Education 80 (1985) 12.

<sup>9</sup>Van Dale, 22.

<sup>10</sup>John W. Westerhoff, "Editorial," Religious Education 80 (1985) 4.

<sup>11</sup>John Cobb, "Can the Church Think Again?" Occasional Papers (United Methodist Board of Higher Education) 12 (1976).

<sup>12</sup>Seymour, O'Gorman and Foster, 112.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>14</sup>Matthew F. Allen, "Religious Education in the Public Schools: Desirability and Possibility," Religious Education 80 (1985) 7.

<sup>15</sup>Jung quoted by Allen, 7.

<sup>16</sup>Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright, The Big Little School (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980) 1

<sup>17</sup>As quoted by Seymour, O'Gorman and Foster, 119.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 103.

- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 116.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 20.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 11.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 107.
- <sup>23</sup> Brown and Greeley, 66-67.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert W. Zuber, Jr., "Education and Religion: A Misplaced Alliance," Religious Education 80 (1985) 138.
- <sup>25</sup> James C. Carper, "The Christian Day School," in James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt (eds.) Religious Schooling in America (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970) 110.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> As quoted by Lynn, 55.
- <sup>28</sup> Chanan Alexander, "Schools Without Faith," Religious Education 76 (1981) 314.
- <sup>29</sup> Van Dale.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 17.
- <sup>31</sup> Elmer John Thiessen, "A Defense of a Distinctively Christian Curriculum," Religious Education 80 (1985) 44.
- <sup>32</sup> Van Dale, 20-21.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 20.
- <sup>34</sup> James E. Wood, Jr., "Secular Humanism and the Public Schools: Myth or Reality?" PERSC Newsletter 5:2 (1978), as reported by Van Dale, 21.
- <sup>35</sup> Roman Catholic Bishops' Statement, "Public Education and Student Conscience: A Dilemma for Concerned Citizens" (Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, Harrisburg, PA, 1976) 6, as quoted by Van Dale, 14.
- <sup>36</sup> Van Dale, 25.
- <sup>37</sup> Allen, 9.
- <sup>38</sup> Robin Minney, "Religious Education and the Crisis of Literacy," Religious Education 80 (1985) 29-36.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>40</sup>William K. Kay and Fred Hughes, "Christian Light on Education," Religious Education 80 (1985) 62.

<sup>41</sup>George R. LaNoue, Public Funds for Parochial Schools? (New York: Dept. of Religious Liberty, National Council of Churches, 1963) 36, as reported by Lynn, 78.

<sup>42</sup>Edgar Z. Friedenberg, The Vanishing Adolescent (New York: Dell, 1959) 80, as reported by Lynn, 79.

<sup>43</sup>Charles E. Rice, "Conscientious Objection to Public Education: The Grievance and the Remedies," Brigham Young University Law Review (1978) as reported by Carper, 117.

<sup>44</sup>Carper, 111.

<sup>45</sup>Bruce Cooper, Donald H. McLaughlin, and Bruno Manno, "The Latest Word on Private School Growth," Teachers College Record (Fall 1983) 88-98, as reported by Carper, 115.

<sup>46</sup>Association of Christian Schools International statistics sheet, LaHabra, CA, 1984.

<sup>47</sup>This was confirmed in the author's discussions with several teachers and administrators in Adventist, Baptist, Church of Christ Missouri Synod Luther and ACSI schools.

## CHAPTER 8

## AN ALTERNATIVE

## COMMON CONCERNS

The purpose of this chapter is to present an alternative to the parallel approach to education. But before proposing changes, some areas in which there is general agreement concerning the goals of education need to be noted. First, within American society, there is a common concern that every child have free access to quality education. The United States has been the pioneer in the dream of educating every member of society. American education can be viewed as the story of how education was expanded from elitist traditions, borrowed largely from Europe, to encompass the great mass of children and youth.<sup>1</sup> In the new world, education was gradually transformed from a selective and class-biased system to one much more in harmony with American democracy. Americans have, for the most part, been in agreement that education should serve to provide everyone with equal opportunity to develop their potential and contribute to society. The poor, immigrants, racial minorities - everyone - is entitled to an education. It is to the benefit of the state, and thus the state's responsibility, to see to it that all its citizens receive an education.

A second concern is to allow religion its rightful place in school curricula. Though there is no consensus as to what religion's rightful place is, most segments of society agree that the pursuit of truth, excellence and justice are goals common to both religion and education. There is agreement that, while no state religion should be taught, all education should be aimed at what is supremely worthwhile. In the words of Philip Phenix, the goal of education is the formation of good character, whose measure is the habit and attitude of devotion.<sup>2</sup>

More and more it is being recognized that religion is not a purely private affair. As ultimate loyalty to what is supremely worthwhile and as a fundamental life orientation, religion is profoundly relevant to all life. We may even be witnessing a new appreciation of the religious on the intellectual level. Richard Neuhaus notes that in many disciplines such as the sciences, jurisprudence and ethics, there is an explicit and admitted search for the metaphysical, the transcendent, i.e., religious meaning.<sup>3</sup> He suggests that

as society becomes more modern, as life becomes more specialized, and the threat of "atomization" becomes more immediate, the need for an overarching meaning system, which is to say, religion, becomes more urgent. Therefore, it may well be that in a post-industrial modern society such as ours we are witnessing not the withering away of religion, but a new resurgence of religious belief.<sup>4</sup>

It becomes more and more important, then, that the religious dimension inherent in all fields of study be recognized.

A third concern is to recognize and respect fundamental differences among students. Education should be pluralistic without being divisive. While exposure to the varied religious and philosophic traditions is beneficial at some point, families should not be forced to educate their children within a perspective enemical to their own beliefs. It is at this point that current educational practices have been most severely criticized.<sup>5</sup> Critics of the system have pointed out that American education has consistently served dominant class interests. Concern for a common educational system has glossed over ethnic, cultural and religious differences. It has perpetuated the political, social and religious status quo. Elliot Eisner summarizes:

Not only have the schools been used by these [dominant] classes to create a large and available labor force, but the schools have conscioulsy or unconsciously served as a breeding ground for the inclucation of obedience to authority, acceptance of specialization in work, and competitiveness leading even to intragroup hostility.<sup>6</sup>

Despite a tarnished record, however, the ideal of respecting individual differences remains integral to American education. Education in the United States has always sought to guard aganst the tendency towards domination by the powerful.

A fourth concern is that education be meaningful. Human nature is rooted in meaning and directed towards the fulfillment of meaning.<sup>7</sup> Human beings are essentially creatures who have the power to experience meanings. Phenix maintains that "the various patterns of knowledge are



varieties of meaning, and the learning of these patterns is the clue to the effective realization of essential humanness through the curriculum of general education."<sup>8</sup> This means that curricula should be planned so as to engender essential meanings. To do so, educational institutions need a guiding philosophy to give coherence to the various subjects taught. Education needs a purpose in order to be meaningful.

#### TWO BASIC PROBLEMS

As has been noted in the previous chapter, there are many problems that plague schools today. Currently there is widespread unhappiness regarding many aspects of the educational system in the United States. Educators have attempted to address this discontent through various curriculum reforms and changes in philosophy. Yet the unhappiness and the exodus from state schools has not been stemmed. A number of persons and groups are searching for other ways to address the problems.<sup>9</sup> A coalition is developing that views the structure and design of American schooling itself as the root of the problem and are suggesting a new paradigm for schooling altogether. These proposals for a basic restructuring of education addresses two basic problems.

### Megastructures

The first problem is one that Richard J. Neuhaus and Peter L. Berger have identified through their public policy research.<sup>10</sup> They have discovered that there is great antipathy aimed at all levels of big government. Such megastructures are perceived as impersonal, overpowering and hostile. Against such structures persons feel powerless.

According to John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman, the American public school system is one of these megastructures.<sup>11</sup> The child and family are forced to submit to it, despite the fact that it will not adjust to them. Coons and Sugarman find the neighborhood school to be unresponsive to the neighborhood because it is forced to fit the requirements of the school district and the state. For some there is the costly choice of private education but for most there is only one choice: the state school, take it or leave it.

Coons and Sugarman note that children and families differ in a variety of ways - different learning styles, different educational goals, different ideologies. The present educational system is not structured to take account of these differences. Rather, public monies are given to state-run school districts which offer one style of universal, free education defined by the state. Such "melting pot" education promotes consensus and assimilation into the dominant class.

The first problem, then, is that state run-educational systems are simply too big and too impersonal. Such systems cannot respond to local or individual needs and differences.

### Objectivity

A second problem is the need for state schools to be neutral in matters of religion, and the needs of individuals to live out their faith. Currently the law of the land has been interpreted to mean that religion can only be taught in state schools from an objective standpoint.<sup>12</sup> Those schools that have attempted to include religion in the curriculum at all have basically offered children a course in comparative religion or values clarification. But because religion serves as a primary channel by which individual identity and morality is formed, the objective teaching of religion, especially to young children, is harmful rather than helpful. As Ivan Cassidy has pointed out, "exposure to too many conflicting ideas, especially if they are superficially or inappropriately presented, can be confusing to young children and actually miseducative."<sup>13</sup> Chanan Alexander agrees, claiming that

we have succeeded so completely in expelling particularistic religious beliefs from modern schooling and in providing a "dispassionate", "objective," "scientific," "value-free" education that our success is becoming our demise. For when put into practice, dispassionate value freedom comes to mean that no institution is worth defending and no idea of ultimate

significance. With no conception of things sacred, we can communicate neither a social vision, nor a sense of purpose to our youth.<sup>14</sup>

To expect teachers to be dispassionate and objective in teaching morals is to miss the very point of moral education, Neuhaus and Alexander point out.<sup>15</sup> Schools need to promote values, not simply clarify them. Neuhaus states, "Values clarification is widely perceived as a very poor substitute for the abandonment of any trans-subjective, or if you will, objective value system."<sup>16</sup>

Religious educators have long held that religious education should be pursued within the context of a faith community. Characteristic of this point of view is Thomas H. Groome who writes:

...both the insights of the social sciences and the Church's own lived experience indicate clearly that becoming Christian requires the socializing process of a community capable of forming people in Christian self-identity. We "become Christian together."<sup>17</sup>

Children need role models in order to know who they are and what is expected of them. They need to feel a sense of belonging. According to Phenix, students should be taught to understand and appreciate their own religious traditions; to realize the full resources for the embodiment of religious faith available in their tradition at its best.<sup>18</sup> R.S. Peters has well said, children can enter "the palace of Reason" but they should be led to it "through the courtyard of Habit and Tradition" - habit and tradition which are rooted in the particularities of the family and the culture of the local community.<sup>19</sup>

The objective teaching of religion does not engender commitment or even deep understanding. Yet this is not to say that comparative religions and values clarification should not be taught at some point. Along with a deepening of faith through each student's own heritage should go a broadening of perspective through continuing conversations with persons of other traditions.<sup>20</sup> Once identity and moral responsibility have been internalized, a point at which most young people have moved from concrete to formal cognitive operations, the comparative study of theories, beliefs and commitments of all sorts should become part of the curriculum. It is at this point that interreligious dialogues can be helpful rather than detrimental.

#### AN ALTERNATIVE

These two problems of megastructures and objectivity point to tough questions facing education today: How can a free quality education be guaranteed all children and youth without falling into huge bureaucracies that take away individual freedom and worth? How can religion take its rightful and needed place in the curriculum without being either diluted to its lowest common denominator or shoving one set of particularistic beliefs down everyone's throats? How might education be structured so that loyalty to the state and good citizenship skills are learned without the state serving as the controlling agency? In addressing

these questions an examination of the social structures of our society and the world views they are based upon is needed.

Throughout the 1978-79 academic year a group of scholars at the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship studied the topic of "Public Justice and Educational Equity". The results of their study are published in a book entitled, Society State, and Schools.<sup>21</sup> Theirs is an articulately Christian approach to the educational dilemma.

The consortium calls for a new paradigm in which to base educational structures. Their paradigm is drawn from a pluralist social philosophy. Such a philosophy is in distinction to collectivism and individualism which have dominated Western thinking since the Enlightenment. Collectivism, they maintain, is inadequate for dealing with the plurality of views in American society.<sup>22</sup> Individualism, they fault because it fails to recognize the extent to which individual human rights are integrally related to the social order and particularly to voluntary associations.<sup>23</sup> Individualism almost always falls in with collectivism when dealing with social structures.

Pluralism, a third alternative which arose in the wake of the Reformation, regards multiple associations, such as families, schools, the neighborhood, and churches, as the basic structuring principle for societal life. Despite the fact that several American colonial social systems, including the schools systems, were pluralistic, pluralism

has not come to consistent expression in the United States.

Pluralism rejects the ultimacy of the individual standing apart from societal structures integral to his nature. It posits instead a person-in-associations model as the framework within which individuality finds meaning. This view also denies that any large institution can lay claim to being the single, all-embracing social structure in which ultimate meaning is located. Pluralism holds instead that multiple social structures are real and meaningful.

Educationally, pluralism regards neither the family, the church, nor the state as the rightful locus of authority in education. That authority is vested in the school as an academic institution. The school is not subsumed under the state, nor under the church or family, although it has working relationships with all three. In the words of the consortium:

While parental authority is for the family and not the school, parents exercise choice in selecting the school that best fits their values. Similarly, ecclesiastical authority is for the church and not the school, but the church exercises its role in education by shaping its members' perceptions of life and learning. The state also has its own role, that of ensuring social justice and providing equal access to education for all.<sup>24</sup>

The locus of authority in education within pluralism is the school. Educational leaders are charged with the responsibility for curricular programs and appropriate school policy.

While the pluralistic paradigm severely reduces the state's authority in matters of schooling, the state does

have a very important role to play. The state is the balance wheel which regulates and coordinates the work of the other wheels, ensuring a proper intermeshing of functions and facilitating cooperation and partnership.<sup>25</sup> It has a supporting and enabling role, a see-to-it-that-it-gets-done role.

This view of the relationship between educational institutions and the state is very similar to what Neuhaus and Berger propose out of their concern for empowering ordinary people in the face of impersonal megastructures. They propose a paradigm in which there is protection and promotion by public policy of mediating structures, such as schools, that stand between individuals and their private lives and the large institutions of public life. They call on governments to carry out their programs by utilizing such mediating structures wherever possible and shifting some of the work of government to "people sized" agencies where the values and needs of individuals in society can be handled.<sup>26</sup>

According to both the Calvin College consortium and the work of Berger and Neuhaus, social justice translated into public policy for schools means placing the resources of the state on the side of educational equity. A clear distinction between the state and the schools must be observed. The state monopoly in education must be broken and schools must be depoliticized. A pluralist paradigm would uphold the right of each group within society to work out its own world view in a structured program of education.<sup>27</sup>



### A Redefinition of "Public Schools"

Centuries ago, Confuscius maintained that a healthy society was one in which things were properly named.<sup>28</sup> In order to sort out the educational dilemma facing our nation, terms need to be clarified and used properly. Currently the term "public school" is used to indicate one which is administered by the state. As a state institution, public schools maintain a stance of religious neutrality. But are public schools synonomous with state-run schools? Not according to Neuhaus. He writes:

All schools are public schools if they serve the public purpose, the public purpose in this case being that children are educated in those elementary skills and attitudes necessary to citizenship in this democracy. The school, whatever its sponsorship, is a public school if it meets the needs of its relevant public.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, any school that is open to and serves the public is a public school despite its funding source or sponsoring body.

The term, "public school", needs to be redefined.

Such a definition might include the following:

- 1) Public schools are those that are open to persons of all races, creeds and ethnic origins.
- 2) Public schools are those that adhere to commonly agreed upon academic and health standards.
- 3) Public schools are those that are committed to the democratic principles of the equality of all peoples and that promote mutual understanding within a pluralistic context.
- 4) Public schools are those that are operated with public funds.

This definition of a public school is different from present understandings in that first, it does not limit sponsorship to the state. Under this definition, many

agencies and organizations might sponsor public schools. Secondly, this definition does not hold that schools need to be religiously or ideologically neutral. A religious perspective is allowed as long as it does not teach elitism or undermine democratic principles. Third, in opposition to the way religious schools are now operated, this definition views schools as having a cooperative relationship with the state and a unique sphere of authority with regard to the sponsoring agency. Fourth, any school that adhered to the other three criteria would be eligible to receive public funds. Schools that are unwilling to accept these criteria or were judged delinquent in meeting them, would be free to operate but would be ineligible for public funds. This would allow for those denominations that now and in the future want absolutely no entanglement between the church and state. Such schools would continue to rely on private funding and would rightly be termed "private schools".

#### Advantages

There are many advantages to redefining public schools and organizing them based on a pluralistic model. It allows for many more options in education, acknowledging that a single style of education does not fit all people in American society. It exposes as false the idea that the state or any other agency can develop a curriculum which is "neutral". It recognizes that people have a right to be

educated within a perspective that is compatible with their values, beliefs and ideology as well as in a manner that is most meaningful to them. It recognizes that only by funding all schools can the state really be impartial towards all religions as they are expressed in education.<sup>30</sup> It promotes pluralism while keeping in check divisive elements. It combines concern for the public welfare with concern for family choice resulting in a kind of regulated family choice. It continues the choice between public and private education. The competition and diversity fostered by such a practice would also enhance teachers' professionalism and concern to meet the needs of the students according to Coons and Sugarman.<sup>31</sup>

A move towards education by choice can be seen as a positive step also in community building. Under this kind of a system, school enrollments would probably decline because there would be more schools among which students would distribute themselves. While some might find this alarming, others will maintain that "small is beautiful".<sup>32</sup> Smaller schools offer the opportunity not only for individualized attention, but also for greater cooperation between family, religious institution and school, thus strengthening each. Undoubtedly, there would be a range of size and it should not be supposed that all schools would be small.

One of the advantages of education by choice which is of special for this project, is that it would move

towards bridging the gap between the sacred and the secular. No longer could it be maintained that religious faith must be excluded from the public arena of education. It would clear away the old assumption that religion is a purely a private matter and must not be permitted to spill over into the ways in which we dream and decide in public about the constructions of society.<sup>33</sup> Neither would the assumption that there is something inherently incompatible between particulaistic faith and learning be tolerated. Rather, paradigm would allow people of faith to pursue wholistic education without putting a heavy financial burden on their families.

Such an educational paradigm can be viewed as intrinsically American with its history of toleration and ideal of freedom of choice. It can also be seen as deeply rooted in a Biblical view of reality, one that takes the pattern for a just social order from an ordered and meaningful creation.<sup>34</sup>

### Details

Having listed its advantages, the question must be asked, "Is education by choice workable?" Is such a system practical? Without implimenting such a program these questions can not be answered with any degree of certainty. However, a number of proposals are being made that seem workable.

Coons and Sugarman propose that an experiment in education by choice be conducted in order to determine the practicality of any one approach. They, themselves, make a number of proposals for how the system could work. Basically, in all of them, the parents of each child would receive either a scholarship or a voucher. They would then be free to choose any school that meets the state's educational requirements. In this way the money the state raises for education would be redirected to the family - the family being the community that is the most knowledgeable about and caring of the child. Families, not the experts, know best what children want and need most from schooling, they argue.<sup>35</sup> The Calvin College consortium also comes out strongly in favor of the voucher system stating that it is a concept whose time has come.<sup>36</sup>

#### OBJECTIONS

The changes that have been proposed will seem radical to many and alarming to some. Change, in of itself, is difficult. But difficulties should not be a deterrent to moving towards an educational system that is truly superior to that which is now operative. No system can eliminate all problems. It can only determine the kinds of problems with which educators will have to concern themselves.

Some objections raised against a restructuring of schooling along pluralistic lines will identify legitimate problems with which the system will have to contend. But

many objections leveled at this new approach are groundless and spring either from lack of knowledge or an unwillingness to change. The next section will examine some of these objections.

### Elitism

One of the first objections that seems to be raised against a pluralist basis of education is that it would lead to elitism. Objectors point to overtly racist private schools, particularly in the south, as indicative of the path down which all schools would walk if given the chance. In fact, some see the move towards schools of choice as springing from racial or elitist purposes.

When examined in light of the evidence, such objections and assumptions do not hold up. The work of Sugarman and Coons, Peter Skerry's study of Christian schools in the South, and Neuhaus and Berger's study of mediating structures have all come to the conclusion that racial prejudice resulting in racial discrimination is not a significant factor in the movement toward schools of choice.<sup>37</sup>

Most private schools, both urban and rural, are more racially integrated on a voluntary basis than are state schools operating under legal mandates to integrate. This is because private schools draw from all segments of a community whereas state schools enroll neighborhood populations which tend to be racially and ethnically

homogeneous.

Many private schools, without government insistence, have policies against discrimination on any basis. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), the largest service organization for Christian schools in the United States, requires a non-discrimination policy of all its member schools. Within the system being advocated, elitism is further discouraged since schools that discriminate would be ineligible for public funds.

In fact, it can be argued that the proposed system would be less elitist than the current system. As it now stands, only the rich have a choice in education since it is only they who can afford to send their children to private schools. Under the proposed system, rich and poor alike could choose the school that would best serve their needs. In a situation where all members of society are free to choose to attend, any school elitism can not survive. Granted that the government will need to insure that nondiscriminatory practices are upheld, but this should not be too difficult. Such responsibility is already invested in the government in terms of job opportunities.

### Divisiveness

A second objection to choice in education is that it would be divisive, that it would splinter society into many pronounced sub-cultures and thus divide the nation. Of

particular concern is the fear that schools of choice would heighten religious antagonisms.

Certainly, it must be acknowledged that certain religious groups may greet this proposal as a means whereby they might further their sectarian beliefs. In this model, advocating sectarian beliefs is not prohibited. In fact it has been suggested that investigating the depths of sectarian beliefs leads to new depths of truth. But what this model also assures is that no one is forced to listen to sectarian beliefs. Furthermore, schools receiving public funds must evidence a commitment to the democratic principles of the equality of all peoples and promote mutual understanding of the pluralities that exist in American society. Again, the government has a role to play in seeing to it that schools meet this criteria.

It is certainly true that schools of choice may highlight the differences that exist within society. But to recognize true distinctions, rather than to assume that everyone is (or should be) the same, is not to detract from the proposal. In the pluralist paradigm, society is viewed in terms of its kaleidoscopic differences, all of which have a place and form a pattern, rather than a melting pot where differences are subsumed into one dull national character. Pluralism values diversity and rejoices in the fact that all people are not alike.

But what will hold society together if not the schools? What defense will there be against anarchy? There



are many factors that hold American society together and many places where opportunities exist for dialogue across ethnic, racial, social and religious lines: the media, government, the military, sports activities, the theater, equal access to housing and employment, public parks, libraries, and museums. The United States is in a position today to accept pluralism in education because national identity is maintained in so many other ways. It need not be assumed that educational institutions are the only or the primary places where people interact and dialogue with one another. And it should not be assumed that education from within a particular perspective would negate all desires towards living in community with those who hold a different perspective.

Yet the contention is pressed that the end of the state school would mean the end of a common socialization that is necessary for citizenship. In response it can first be pointed out that public schools of the great immigrant periods were not nearly as integrating a factor as many believe.<sup>38</sup> Charles R. Kniker further lands a blow to such predictions in his research which shows that that private schools have done an equally good job of developing commonalities (common citizenship skills, a common creed, common experiences, common opportunities, commonly agreed upon reforms to improve society) which was the impetus behind the formation of common schools in the 1800's.<sup>39</sup> Despite the achievement of these goals both in public and

private schools, American society has drastically changed since their formulation. Kinker sees only the fostering of common experiences and common opportunities as being relevant to our situation as a nation today. Will Herberg agrees with Kinker when he writes:

Today the older emphasis on cultural unity and the older fear of divisiveness are not merely out of place; they can well become an oppressive mark in the compulsive conformity that is increasingly the mark of our other-directed culture. Today the emphasis should not be upon unity, except of course the political unity of the nation, but on diversity.<sup>40</sup>

In addition it must be pointed out that in countries where educational choice has been permitted, rather than being divisive, independent schools make unique contributions to society. They offer strength, diversity and healthy competition to each other which actually build culture.<sup>41</sup> It has further been discovered that state schools do not suffer under the pluralist view of society.

### Confusion

A third objection is that pluralism is an invitation to disorder, confusion, even anarchy. People ask how families will know which school to choose for their children given a great number of choices.

First, let it be acknowledged that a proposal for education by choice involves the risk of some bad schools being started. Such schools are begun even now. This proposal rests on the belief that students and their parents

will, over time, be able to recognize and choose schools that offer quality education. It also posits, however, that there is not a single form of good education since what may be good for one person is bad for another. Families may have to experiment to discover the school that offers the best education for each particular child. Basically, this proposal is based on a faith that parents care enough about their children not to put them in schools that are obviously offering inferior education and thus, bad schools will be weeded out.

In response to the fears of anarchy, Neuhaus assures us that the movement towards schools of choice does not represent the centrifugal threat that many fear.<sup>43</sup> The attempt of divorcing schools from state control can be likened to the attempt to divorce the church from state control in the 17th and 18th centuries. Then, Separatists refusing to submit to the state religion, called for a restructuring of society to allow for religious freedom. Many objections were raised against the separation of church and state. Those in power strenuously protested that if people were allowed to choose their own religion, the official state religion would be undermined and chaos would result. Separatists were accused of being anarchists.<sup>44</sup>

History has proved this fear to be unfounded. Whereas freedom of religion brought new problems, it has not brought anarchy. In fact, since few would today advocate returning to a single state religion, we can assume that

freedom of religion has proved more beneficial than detrimental. Likewise, educational freedom, once instituted will prove to be workable and beneficial to society.

The price of freedom is the necessity to make wise and informed choices. To argue that people are incapable of making such choices is to argue that they should not be free. In America, to choose the risks of freedom is in line with the principles upon which our nation was founded. In a country that allows for freedom in religious affiliation, people have the right to expect freedom of choice in education, especially when it is mandated by law.

#### Children without Families

A further question that has been raised as an objection to education by choice regards who decides what school is appropriate for children separated from their families.<sup>45</sup> This question, though raising a legitimate concern, is not difficult to answer. Coons and Sugarman advocate that in every situation children should have a major voice in where they go to school. Whether a part of a family unit or not, a child's desires and choices need to be respected.

It must be granted, however, that all children need guidance and help in making a decision as important as where they will receive their education. But no child is totally removed from support systems that can aid in this decision.

If a child is an orphan or a ward of the state, there continue to be adults who are concerned about his/her welfare. Such adults assume many parental responsibilities which even now include, to a certain extent, where their wards will be educated. Students separated from their families have the same choices as any other student. The only difference is who helps them make the choice.

#### PRECEDENTS

Undoubtedly, the objections and concerns that could be raised concerning education by choice are legion. What is important to note, however, is that education by choice seems to work well in situations where it is put into practice. The Calvin College consortium examines five countries that promote alternatives systems of education: Canada, Israel, England, Belgium and The Netherlands. Though the systems are different in each country, the common findings are that

- 1) Educational pluralism exists and works in democratic countries. The United States is an exception in the Western world in that it grants virtually no aid to its independent (i.e., non state-run) schools.
- 2) The pluralist vision is not a utopian ideal. Rather, pluralism is a plausible, realistic and coherent philosophy of society that works in education.
- 3) Rather than being divisive, independent schools make unique contributions to society.
- 4) Independent schools are more democratic than the present American unified and monopolistic education system. Within a system that offers a variety of alternatives, all schools are given a fair chance such that rich and poor alike can experience true justice and freedom in education.

- 5) Government schools do not suffer under the pluralist view of society. Pluralism does not usurp government schools, but has tended to strengthen them.<sup>46</sup>

In his book, The French Achievement; Private School Aid: A Lesson for America Robert M. Healey comes to similar conclusions about the French experiment with choice in education.<sup>47</sup> Healey, who himself had been an opponent of public support for religious schools, spent a year (1965-66) in France studying the contract system that has been established there for governmental subsidy of non state schools. As a result, he not only changed his personal opinion, but has become an advocate for a "salutary shift of opinion in the American mind concerning non-preferential assistance to our schools, and not least in the mind of the United States Supreme Court."<sup>48</sup> He finds that under the Debre law aid has enabled private schools to develop democratic enrollments and avoid being increasingly limited to pupils from the upper classes. Far from being a source of division and dissention among the French people, the Debre law has caused the disappearance of the old quarrels from the body politic. "On balance the Debre law must be called a success."<sup>49</sup>

#### SUMMARY

David Tyack reminds us that the debate about education is really talk about the kind of future we want as a society.<sup>50</sup> To make a commitment to pluralism and to

schools of choice would mean that Americans no longer view themselves as part of a "Christian nation". It would be an acknowledgement that the United States is a country that includes Christians (both Protestant and Catholic), but also secular humanists, Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, and others. Such a social understanding would necessitate a reformulation of the American dream to allow for diversity.

Educationally, a commitment to pluralism might be evaluated according to a model that K. Nichols and M.V.C. Jeffreys propose. Nichols has devised an educational model founded on the notions of commitment, search, and dialogue. Commitment is a personal, partly mental and partly emotional act which both interprets and integrates experience. Search is a serious willingness to subject commitments to scrutiny and to allow changes in them, in a measure because the search itself stems from those commitments. Dialogue contributes the idea that education is not a solitary quest but involves co-operation and relationships with other people which are integral to the whole enterprise.<sup>51</sup>

Choice in education allows for a wholistic and comprehensive approach. It is an answer to the polarization that is being inflicted on today's children that receive an education both at the hands of the state and religious institutions. Rather than having two worlds in which to invest one's energies and loyalties, schools that integrate the religious dimension into the curriculum help students to develop an integrated worldview.

The posture of religious educators in seeking to involve themselves in general education does not need to be defensive. The need for the religious element in education has already been fully argued. One's faith will and should color the way one approaches education. To claim education can be neutral is unrealistic. Choice would allow schools to be explicit concerning their ideology, purpose and goals.

Religious institutions need to encourage the move towards educational diversity. To refuse to do so will result in a further undermining of religion. Religious institutions can not compete successfully with educational endeavors supported through public funds and they dare not operate in isolation to general education. If children are to develop a perspective on life in which religion has a place, then religion must be a part of all educational endeavors.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Elliot Eisner (ed.) Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 1.

<sup>2</sup>Philip H. Phenix, Education and the Common Good (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961) 252.

<sup>3</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, "Educational Diversity in Post-Secular America," Religious Education 77 (1983) 310-311.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 311.

<sup>5</sup>Eisner, 2.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Philip H. Phenix, Realms of Meaning (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) x.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Neuhaus, 327. The coalition of forces includes Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of market oriented economics, Christopher Jencks and those that are suspicious of establishments in general, organizations concerned with equality for the poor, civil libertarians, and those concerned for religious freedom. Neuhaus believes this coalition will grow stronger in the years ahead.

<sup>10</sup>Peter L. Berger and Richard J. Neuhaus, To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy (Washington: American Enterprise Inst., 1977)

<sup>11</sup>John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman, Education By Choice: The Case for Family Control (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978)

<sup>12</sup>Martna M. McCarthy, "Religion in Public Schools: Legal Standards and Unresolved Issues," Harvard Educational Review 55 (1985) 278-316.

<sup>13</sup>Ivan Cassidy, "Reaction to the Keynote Address," Religious Education 73 (1978) 159-161.

<sup>14</sup>Chanan Alexander, "Schools Without Faith." Religious Education 76 (1981) 307.

<sup>15</sup>Neuhaus; and Alexander.

<sup>16</sup>Neuhaus, 320.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980) 126.

<sup>18</sup>Phenix, Education and the Common Good, 247.

<sup>19</sup>R.S. Peters as quoted by Cassidy, 160.

<sup>20</sup>Phenix, Education and the Common Good, 247.

<sup>21</sup>Gordon Spykman et al, Society, State and Schools (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1981)

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>26</sup>Neuhaus and Berger as quoted by Spkyman, 2.

<sup>27</sup>Spykman, 168.

<sup>28</sup>Wing-Tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 30 and 40.

<sup>29</sup>Neuhaus, 318.

<sup>30</sup>Spykman, 112.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>32</sup>E.F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful; Economics As If People Mattered (New York: Harper & Row, 1975)

<sup>33</sup>Neuhaus, 309.

<sup>34</sup>Spykman, 145.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>37</sup>Neuhaus, 319.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Charles R. Kniker, "Reflection on the Continuing Crusade for Common Schools: Glorious Failures, Shameful Haravests, or...?" in James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt (eds.) Religious Schooling in America (Birmingham, AL:

Religious Education Press, 1984) 170.

<sup>40</sup>Will Herberg, "Religion, Democracy and Public Education," in John Cogley (ed.) Religion in America (New York: Meridian Press, 1958) 145.

<sup>41</sup>Spykman, 144.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>43</sup>Neuhauser, 319.

<sup>44</sup>Floyd E. Mallott, Studies in Brethren History (Elgin, IL: Brethren, 1954) 26.

<sup>45</sup>Question raised by Mary Elizabeth Moore in consultation on the project.

<sup>46</sup>Spykman, 143-134.

<sup>47</sup>Robert M. Healey, The French Achievement; Private School Aid: A Lesson for America (New York: Paulist Press, 1974)

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>50</sup>As quoted by Carper and Hunt, x.

<sup>51</sup>As reported by William K. Kay and Fred Hughes, "Christian Light on Education," Religious Education 80 (1985) 59.

## CONCLUSION

This project has sought to examine both the content and the context of education in the United States with an eye to how the sacred and the secular might be merged. It has been based on the belief that, first, religion and education have similar goals: to pursue truth, develop moral character, promote reverence for life and a search for that which is truly worthful and meaningful. Secondly, it is based on the notion that religion and education can not be clearly separated because the sacred and the secular can not be separated. Religion has always demanded education and general education can not be divorced from religious questions and concerns. A third conviction is that the educational enterprise both within religious institutions and general society, are in trouble today because of attempts to separate the sacred and the secular, religion and education. The parallel approach to education in the United States which grew out of a concern to educate the whole public and protect religious diversity, is plagued with problems. Fourthly, the author is firmly convinced that today we are witnessing the emergence of a new spirituality, i.e., a new way of perceiving and understanding reality. It is a wholistic view which recognizes life's interdependence and, thus, seeks to integrate thinking, relationships and social structures.

Out of these convictions and the research that has

been done, a number of proposals have been made. First, it has been suggested that education appropriate incarnational spirituality in designing curricula. Incarnational spirituality fosters an epistemology which attempts to integrate the various modes of knowing. Curriculum planners would need to take note of the five modes of knowing and integrate them in a balanced fashion. Four of the modes of knowing are universal in terms of their search for meaning and one (scripture) is grounded in particularity. The four modes of knowing each follow a continuum along which the thought process develops from the concrete to the abstract, the more abstract being that which has traditionally been viewed as religious.

An epistemology based on incarnational spirituality sees not only that there is simultaneously a developmental process which occurs within each mode of knowing but that the modes of knowing need to be integrated as well. Only when all modes of knowing are operating equally well can human beings reach their highest achievements. Education can nurture this sort of integration by systematically focusing on those subjects in which the deepest sort of integration occurs. It has been suggested that liturgy, Heilsgeschichte, stewardship and community all revolve around a search for meaning that is highly integrative. That is, these subject not only integrate the sacred and ssecular (abstract and concrete reasoning) but integrate the various modes of knowing as well. Suggestions for proper

methodologies and warnings concerning the limitations of any one focus in education have been presented.

The fifth mode of knowing, the means by which meaning is derived from scripture, grounds each of the other modes of knowing in particularity. While liturgy, Heilsgeschichte, stewardship and community are advocated as appropriate subject matter for persons of all faith traditions, the particularities of scripture and tradition will affect the content of each. Though one approach to education has been advocated, it is also recognized that persons with different religious commitments will present and understand a subject differently.

One of the major contentions of the project follows from the above. It is the realization that there is no universal education that is applicable to all people. Though the subject matter may be universal, particularity, which finds ultimate expression through religious commitments, demands that education be pursued pluralistically. This project has rejected the notion that what is particular can be culled out and deposited in education sponsored by religious institutions. While sectarian education will always be needed, limiting religious education to what is particular, and thus avoiding the great religious issues of humankind, will never serve well the religious communities nor society as a whole.

Because religion and education can not be separated without diluting the goals of both, and because

particularity is intrinsic to all commitments, there is a need not only for diversified curricula but for an educational system that allows for choice. This project has suggested a way in which a school system might be designed which would both serve the public good and honor the uniqueness of all individuals and social groupings. Such a system is a logical extension of the American commitment to freedom, justice and equity for all citizens.

The creation of schools of choice holds great potential for merging the sacred and secular, religion and education. Yet it is a proposal which will be difficult to put into operation if at all. There are some hopeful signs, however, and reasons for optimism. First, as Carper and Hunt point out, Americans seem more receptive now than at any other time in recent history to options in education.<sup>1</sup> Second, they note that the general public seems to be more supportive than ever before of tuition tax credits, vouchers, and similar proposals for enhancing educational choice. And thirdly, there is a trend in this country towards government deregulation and returning decision making power to the people.

Furthermore, the need to move towards wholeness seems to be widely recognized today. Pluralism is inescapable in a world becoming more and more mobile, more and more aware of what is happening on the other side of the globe. If incarnational spirituality is truly a mutation in human consciousness as Panikkar maintains, integration of

the sacred and secular is likely to increase throughout society. Progress in this direction may, from time to time, run into road blocks, but its evolution cannot be reversed.

Such facts prompt us towards the realization that the tide is turning and a new day is dawning for education in this country. Change is on its way. We have a rare opportunity today to be involved in momentous changes in education.



## ENDNOTE

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